

Leaving Care Positive Housing Pathways – Joint Protocol



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1 Introduction

Leaving care is a challenging and important transition into adulthood. The success or failure of this transition will have great impact on the outcomes throughout early adulthood and into the rest of the life of a young person leaving care.

Ensuring Care Leavers have suitable accommodation is intrinsic to this and needs to be recognised as much more than just finding a place to live. Care Leavers should be informed at an early stage about all options available to them and the advantages and disadvantages of each option whilst also thinking about their own wishes, aspirations and what support they need to succeed.

To live independently requires a variety of skills, support and resources. Depending on earlier experiences, Care Leavers are likely to have had varying levels of opportunity to develop such skills. Care Leavers generally assume responsibility for their own accommodation at a much younger age than their peers and are likely to make mistakes and require support from others to learn from experiences. This learning journey will be longer for some than others. The importance of a multi-agency approach is paramount to securing successful accommodation for Care Leavers.

The GM Care Leavers Guarantee, launched in April 2019, outlines the city-region's bold approach to boosting outcomes for often vulnerable young people who leave the care system. The Guarantee sets out five key priority areas of focus to be delivered via a new Greater Manchester Care Leavers Trust Board. Those leaving care are to be enabled to:

- Be better prepared and supported to live independently
- Have improved access to education, employment, and training
- Experience stability in their lives and feel safe and secure
- Receive improved access to health support
- Achieve financial stability

Who does this protocol apply to?

The local authority is the corporate parent of children in care and therefore has a legal and moral duty to provide the kind of support that any good parent would provide to their own children. This is a legal responsibility which extends to all departments within the council. The governance and responsibility of implementation is held with the Corporate Parenting Cooperative. All local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure all eligible and relevant Care Leavers are placed in suitable accommodation when leaving care.

This protocol applies to this cohort of young people and to be clear, the relevant definitions are:

Eligible child - A child aged 16 and 17 who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who is still looked after.

Relevant child - A child aged 16 and 17 who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who has left care. This also includes young people who were detained (e.g., in a youth offending institution or hospital) when they turned 16 but immediately before that were looked after.

Former relevant child - A young person (YP) over 18 who was previously 'eligible' or 'relevant'. Local authorities support this group at least until age 21, or some duties until age 25. 5 V3.0 070922

Qualifying Children – A young person under 21 who stopped being looked after, after the age of 16 and is in full-time higher or further education. This includes young people who are under a special guardianship order.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Young People - A young person who qualifies for a leaving care service from Manchester City Council who has been granted refugee status. Also, those who qualify and are given leave to remain up to the age of 21 years or who have an extension beyond the age of 18 for a minimum of one year.

Our ambition

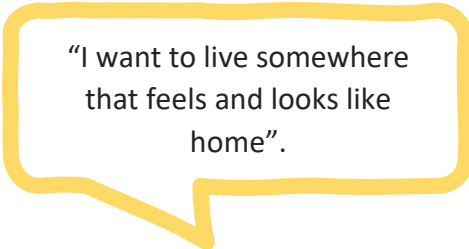
The 'Our Manchester' strategy sets out the vision for Manchester to be in the top-flight of world-class cities by 2025. Critical to the delivery of the vision is supporting the citizens of Manchester, which includes its children, young people, and their families, to achieve their potential and benefit from its improving economic, cultural, and social capital.

The Children and Young People's Plan 2020 - 2024 - translates the Our Manchester priorities into a vision for 'building a safe, happy, healthy and successful future for children and young people'. This means:

- All children and young people feel safe, their welfare promoted and safeguarded from harm within their homes, schools, and communities.
- All children and young people grow up happy – having fun, having opportunities to take part in leisure and culture activities, and having good social, emotional, and mental wellbeing. It also means all children and young people feeling that they have a voice and influence as active Manchester citizens.
- The physical and mental health of all children and young people is maximised, enabling them to lead healthy, active lives, and to have the resilience to overcome emotional and behavioural challenges. All children and young people have the opportunity to thrive and achieve individual success in a way that is meaningful to them. This may be in their education, or in their emotional or personal lives

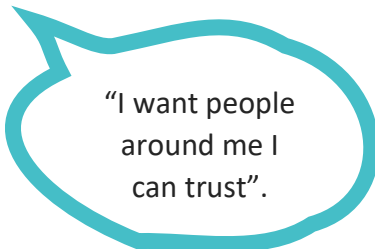
We are passionate advocates for our care leavers, consultation and engagement has identified four consistent themes from young people, these were:

- Time –for young people to build trusting relationships with professionals, and with family.
- Help & support –with education, mental health & wellbeing, and life skills.
- The ‘day-to-day (small) things’ -such as access to Wi-Fi and social media.
- Young-person centred decision making -Young people repeatedly described examples of not being heard, listened to, or included in decision making.

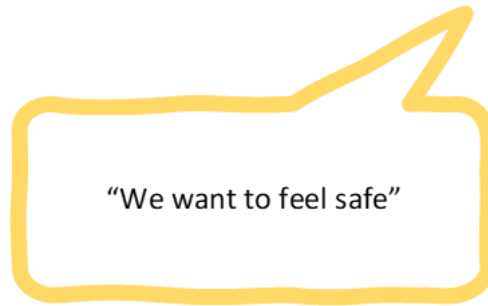


“I want to live somewhere that feels and looks like home”.

We want all relevant staff in Manchester to share our ambition for care leavers, we are committed to ensuring awareness raising for care leavers is embed into staff induction and training plans.



“I want people around me I can trust”.



Leaving Care Positive Housing Pathways – Related documents and Legislative Framework

[Greater Manchester Housing Strategy](#)

[Manchester children and young people plan](#)

[Our Children Sufficiency Strategy 2020-22](#)

[Early Help Strategy | Manchester City Council](#)

[Manchester Care Leavers Local Offer](#)

[The Positive Pathway - St Basils](#)

[Housing Act 1996 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#) (particularly Part 6 and 7)

[Chapter 22: Care leavers - Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities - Guidance- GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Children Act 1989 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#) (particularly Section 23, 24 and 27)

[Children Act 1989: transition to adulthood for care leavers - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Children and Social Work Act 2017 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

[Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

[5.7.2 Staying Put \(proceduresonline.com\)](#)

Corporate Parenting Principles

When exercising their functions in relation to children in care and Care Leavers, Manchester City Council has regard to the seven Corporate Parenting principles identified in the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

These are:

- (a) to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;
- (b) to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- (c) to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
- (d) to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
- (e) to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;

- (f) for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work;
- (g) to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

Local Offer

Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 which requires each local authority to consult on and publish a local offer for its Care Leavers. The local offer 7 V3.0 070922 should provide information about all the services and support that is available to Care Leavers from the local authority including information about both their statutory entitlements as well as any discretionary support that a local authority chooses to provide. For further information on the Dorset offer click on the link below:

[Manchester Care Leavers Local Offer](#)

2. Purpose

This Joint Protocol is an agreement between Housing Services and Children's Social care to:

- Promote arrangements for achieving planned, supportive transitions to independent living
- Promote early identification of risk of homelessness and a quick joined response for those who do become homeless
- Prevent Care Leavers being homeless upon a care placement ending
- Prevent Care Leavers presenting as homeless to housing services for emergency placements
- Ensure Care Leavers are accommodated appropriately in good quality affordable homes
- Establish the roles and responsibilities towards Care Leavers and define the roles of the statutory agencies within the legislative framework of the Pathway Plan
- Promote our corporate parenting responsibility towards our Care Leavers, providing a shared commitment from Children's and Housing Services to ensure our young people achieve the best outcomes possible
- Identify how Children's and Housing Services, by working together can meet the needs of Care Leavers, effectively
- Ensure there are no gaps in services and that resources are effectively used
- Ensure all officers using this protocol are mindful of the roles and responsibilities of organisations working with young people and the need for partnership working to secure positive outcomes.

3. Helping care leavers to prepare

Learning the necessary skills to live independently does not begin after a young person have left care, it occurs throughout their journey. Therefore, young people will be encouraged to develop these skills in both their placements and via a range of support services and tools to plan for permanence.

Social Workers and Personal Advisors will support the assessment of independence skills and will provide support, advice, and guidance on a range of issues relating to leaving care including:

- Accessing Education, Employment, and training
- Developing Independence skills
- Finding and managing suitable and secure accommodation
- Managing your finances and claiming benefits
- Support to access Health services including access to emotional and mental health support needs.

Social Workers and Personal Advisors also help to access specialist support when it is needed, this may include counselling and advice services, issues relating to alcohol and drug use, sexual health, budgeting and benefits such as Universal Credit, Job Seekers Allowance, Income Support and Housing Benefit. Social Workers and Personal Advisors will work with young people to enable young people to put into place the things in their life that will enable them to live independently.

The leaving care service has developed specialist housing roles to support social workers and PAs. They can give an additional intervention focused on developing independence using the independence toolkit which has been devised for Foster Carers, Social Workers and Personal Advisors to start early with planning and focuses on skills like managing money and basic advice.

Accommodation pathways have been created to ensure the commissioning of high-quality providers of care through 16+ preferred providers. These providers have been specially commissioned to ensure a focus on quality and should ensure that no care leaver goes through a homeless route to access planned accommodation

This is at the heart of pathway planning and understanding the needs of our young people. We know that getting it right at this stage will lay the foundations to a happy and stable forever home.

“I want to live somewhere where there are good transport links”

“I don’t want to be left on my own”



Benefits Council Tax and Council Tax Support

Young people who have left the care of Manchester Council are exempt from Council Tax until the age of 25 if:

- They are living alone

- Living in the Manchester area

Even if they do not live alone, they *may* be eligible to claim a 25% reduction in their council tax bill.

After their 25th birthday Care Leavers will be liable for full council tax bills unless they meet the standard criteria for a reduced bill – support with applying for Council Tax Support should be given to a Care Leaver approaching their 25th Birthday should this be the case.

Housing Benefit

Housing benefit has largely been replaced with Universal Credit in most circumstances, however there are still a few exceptions whereby a young person will need to claim housing benefit (exempt supported accommodation, shared lives arrangement etc). Their Social Worker or Personal Assistant should ask the provider or landlord how their accommodation is categorised by housing benefit in order to support the young person to claim correctly.

Universal Credit

Young people will usually only be able to claim Universal Credit if they are aged 18 or over, but some people aged 16 or 17 may be eligible, depending on their circumstances.

Young people should be encouraged to make an application for Universal Credit 6 weeks before their 18th birthday if they are on a low income or unemployed.

Usually, young people cannot claim Universal Credit if in full-time higher education or training, but in exceptional circumstances they may still be eligible to apply.

Universal Credit payments consist of a standard allowance and any extra amounts that apply, for example if you:

- have children
- have a disability or health condition which prevents you from working
- need help paying your rent

A young person will need the following documents to apply:

- bank, building society or credit union account details
- an email address
- information about housing, for example how much rent you pay
- details of income, for example pay slips
- details of savings and any investments
- details of childcare costs if applying for help with childcare costs
- proof of ID - e.g., passport or driving license

Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP)

DHP may be available on a short-term basis to those with an active claim for Universal Credit (housing element) or housing benefit who have no other means to fund a shortfall.

Circumstances where examples of where DHP could be paid include when:

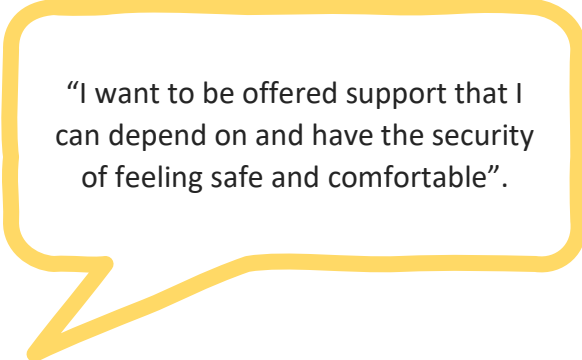
- the Local Housing Allowance is less than the rent you have to pay
- there is an overlap in tenancies
- a non-dependant deduction is being made from your Housing Benefit (A non-dependant is an adult who normally lives with the young person, usually family or a friend. They are expected to make a contribution towards the rent and a deduction is made from your housing benefit to reflect this whether they actually make a contribution or not. This does not include partners, lodgers, joint tenants, occasional guests, family members away from home e.g. armed forces or in prison, someone under 25 who gets Universal Credit with no earned income, Job Seekers' Allowance (income based) or Income Support, or an older person who gets Pension Credit. Deductions are worked out on a sliding scale based on the other person's weekly gross income.)
- income is more than the government threshold (the applicable amount), and benefit is reduced as a result
- the young person has had to pay a rent deposit or rent in advance
- the young person has had to pay out money because of a housing need such as a moving expense
- where eligible rent has been restricted due to the social sector size criteria, that is, where the accommodation is too big for the assessed need.

Contingency Planning


Effective contingency planning avoids being reliant upon the use of unsuitable accommodation options such as emergency shared temporary accommodations placements, where often the most vulnerable care leavers share facilities with other households without on-site support.

Leaving care PA's and partners help to identify the accommodation and support needs for all young people who are leaving care at the earliest stage possible, to help to mitigate the risk of an unplanned, emergency placement being required. The use of the stability pathway supported accommodation panel and the 16+ hub is used to minimise unplanned moves and loss of placements.

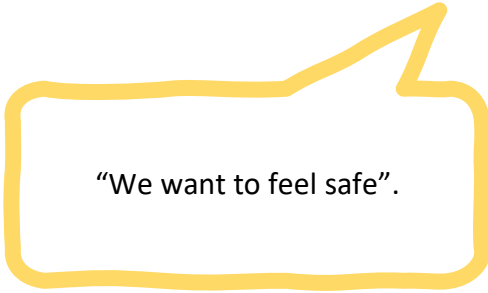
There are a range of interventions available to social workers and PA's to support care leavers that may be at risk of homelessness. Multi-agency placement planning meetings and independent reviews ensure that agencies work together to prioritise contingency planning. The Manchester Early Help Strategy and principles underpin all aspects of this protocol.



“I want to be offered support that I can depend on and have the security of feeling safe and comfortable”.



“I want help to manage my first tenancy and to know my rights”.



“We want to feel safe”.

4. Leaving Care positive housing pathways – Accommodation and Support options

All young people aged 16 to 21 (or 25 needs led) leaving care who are eligible, relevant, or former relevant will have an assessment of need and pathway plan. These are legal documents and the method by which their needs are identified and addressed. The pathway plan is reviewed at least every six months, and there is an expectation that The Housing Specialist Personal Adviser will contribute to this plan when appropriate. The Pathway Plan will detail accommodation needs and the type of housing related support that the young person may require to successfully maintain a tenancy.

All Pathway Plans must include a contingency plan. The success of accommodation offered will be monitored closely, and potential difficulties dealt with promptly working with the young person. If there is evidence that accommodation is unlikely to be sustained, prompt communication between agencies is essential and a review of the pathway plan will be undertaken identifying current and future need. Additional review meetings should be arranged if required. The Housing Specialist Personal Adviser will play a key role in monitoring tenancies, liaising with Housing colleagues and focussing on early intervention to prevent tenancy breakdowns.

The Department for Education (DfE) defines what is suitable accommodation for Care Leavers. This should be considered for each move and the pathway plan should be reviewed within 7 days of any move to ensure the appropriate support is in place. Regulation 9(2) of the Care Leavers Regulations defines ‘Suitable accommodation’ as follows:

- Accommodation which, so far as reasonably practicable, is suitable for the child in light of their needs, including their health needs;
- In respect of which the responsible authority has satisfied itself as to the character and suitability of the landlord or other provider;
- Complies with health and safety requirements related to rented accommodation; and
- In respect of which the responsible authority has, so far as reasonably practicable, considered the young person's wishes and feelings; education, training or employment needs.

Young people leaving care will have different levels of support needs. This may range from intensive support from a number of agencies, to minimum advice and guidance from a leaving care support worker, and the support offered by good housing management practice. A number of accommodation and support options are available for Manchester care leavers, the options include:

Family-based accommodation

Staying Put

This enables care leavers to remain with their former foster carer when they leave care. Where both the young person and their former carer wish to continue living together, the staying put manager will review this arrangement, including financially. The assessment process determines suitability for 'staying put', and outlines the support provided to facilitate this. Social workers need to make the referral for the young person before they are 18. Placements are continually reviewed post 18 to ensure planned moves as and when needed.

Supported Lodgings

Supported Lodgings is an in-house provision in which young people aged 16 – 21 can reside in a family / household environment with the support of approved providers. This is semi-independent care as the providers work under an alternative set of standards than foster carers. This can be a great option for young people to develop their skills for independent living.

Living with Family

Some care leavers choose to return to live with immediate or extended family when they leave care. The suitability of this option is assessed by the PA in the pathway plan, as well as the support provided to the young person and their family to build and maintain positive relationships. Manchester will be using the 'family links' model to support young people build sustainable relationships. PA's are trained in Signs of Safety and will create safety plans with the young person and their network.

Shared Lives

For young people with disabilities who have been looked after by the Local Authority, who transition from Children's to Adults services, this is an option to live within a family environment.

Supported accommodation and semi-independent and independent living

Young people may be accommodated in semi supported accommodation arranged by the Central placement team when they are eligible children. All young people in supported accommodation are tracked by the supported accommodation panel at 17 and all planning is reviewed to ensure a smooth transition into independent accommodation. Any young person at 18 who have not secured alternative independent arrangements needing a continuation of Children supported accommodation must have a 'permission to accommodate' approved by the assistant director and this is reviewed every 6 weeks.

The House Project

A joint partnership with the charity The National House Project, a small team of practitioners work intensely with young people aged 16/17 to form their own support group and progress them to their own individual accommodation. Young people are referred through the Leaving Care team. This has had successful outcomes for a number of young people and the team are recruiting for the 3rd cohort in April 2023.

<https://manchester.thehouseproject.org/>

Training / taster flats (the Beehive)

Manchester City Council offer 6 taster flats/shared provision through 'the Beehive'. Young people are referred through their social worker at 17 and go through a matching process facilitated by Manchester Leaving Care. A number of young have now left the scheme and taken on successful tenancies through social housing

Manchester Access and Support System (MAS)

All housing commissioned supported accommodation schemes offered to Manchester young people and care leavers are managed through MAS. The Housing Specialist Personal Adviser will make the referral for any suitable care leavers 18-25 who are eligible for housing benefit and have some support needs. Shared accommodation varies with each provider, but maintains high standards of care and support

Leaving care specialist Housing PA's support young people access MAS supported accommodation.

Social Housing

Care leavers can register for Manchester Move from being 17. If they meet eligibility criteria they can be considered for priority band one which is managed by a panel of representatives from housing and leaving care. The PA will ensure the application form is completed and submitted, confirming the details of the young person's history, and assessment of their independent living skills and ability to manage the tenancy.

Under Housing Benefit Regulations [HBR 2(1), 11(3B)] all young people who qualify for leaving care services are exempt from the definition of "young individual" and the attendant "shared room rate" restrictions for the purposes of housing benefit. Care leavers between the age of 18 and 25 can get the 'one bedroomed flat' rate for housing benefit, enabling them to bid for one bedroomed properties.

All young people offered housing association tenancies through Manchester Move will be

- referred to tenancy sustainment/ floating support services, at the start of a tenancy to help the young person settle in for a period of 3 months.
- offered Alternative Payment Arrangements (APAs) to enable the housing costs component of Universal Credit to be paid direct to the landlord where appropriate.
- able to give permission for landlords to have direct contact with the Personal Adviser, so any issues can be addressed early.
- able to access support with budgeting plans to assist with day-to-day budgeting or where a young person is struggling to manage rent or other costs

Types of Tenancies Care Leavers may be offered:

- Probationary/Assured tenancies:
- Social landlords will initially offer a 12-month probationary tenancy to all new tenants, which if successful will then convert to an assured tenancy (lifetime tenancy)
- Fixed Term tenancies
- Private landlords may offer:
 - 6 month assured shorthold tenancies
 - 12-month fixed term (or longer)
 - Licence agreements
 - Lodging agreements
 - Tied accommodation tenancies (with a job)

Private Sector Housing Teams

The PSH team will consider referrals from Care Leavers over the age of 21 who are at risk of, or are experiencing homelessness, or where PSH is a positive choice via the MAS.

They are able to provide the deposit and first month rent to participating landlords, and will also accept any landlord on the scheme that young people can find themselves

The team have a list of reputable landlords who can offer tenants affordable rents and allow benefit claimants. A young person can also nominate any landlord that they find themselves for the scheme.

Emergency Accommodation

- Nightspot offers emergency accommodation through the Depaul trust
- Supported lodgings can respond quickly to the needs of young people in an emergency.
- Supported accommodation providers are able to offer emergency beds for care leavers.



5. Care Leavers in Special Circumstances

Young People in University

We have high aspirations for all our Care Leavers and encourage them wherever possible to progress to Higher Education. These students are not eligible for housing benefit or Universal Credit, and therefore alternative financial arrangements need to be made to pay for housing costs, such as, Student Finance. Young people going to university are generally advised not to request their long-term housing offer, unless there is a specific reason that meets their needs. For those already living in their own long-term home who have the opportunity to go to university, the allocated worker should support the young person to select an appropriate university and course, which they can manage alongside their long-term tenancy. Young people should be supported to fully understand the responsibilities they will have as a student with their own tenancy. Financial support for Care Leavers at university is outlined in the Care Leaver Finance Policy.

Young People in the Armed Forces

When leaving the Armed Forces, Care Leavers can apply to join the housing register in an area of their choice and there will be an exception for them to join the register

based on their employment with the Armed Forces. Each individual case should be explored directly with the relevant housing authority. Support and advice should be sought by the care leaver from their PA and if appropriate a housing options meeting booked to discuss all options. There will also be an in-house welfare team within the Armed Forces who can provide advice.

Asylum Seeking Care Leavers

If the young person has No Recourse to Public Funds, then they will not be eligible for employment, Universal Credit or social housing until they have gained eligible status through a successful asylum or humanitarian protection claim. In these circumstances Children's Services will retain responsibility for locating and funding accommodation at least until the outcome of the asylum claim is known.

Care Leavers Living Outside of Manchester Authority

Care Leavers that are settled outside of the Manchester area and want to remain in the area where they have positive relationships and commitments should be encouraged to do so. The service they receive from the leaving care team should be the same as for those living in Manchester, all young people living outside of Manchester can access our pre tenancy preparations and support, underpinned by their pathway plan.

Remaining out of area is likely to be appropriate if the young person is:

- already living in a foster or residential placement out of the area and being settled there
- being assessed as or presenting risk if accommodated in the local area
- requiring university vacation accommodation outside the authority area
- wanting to live nearer to a family member or former carer
- moving away to take up employment or training

The social worker, PA or housing officer should help the young person to contact the local authority Care Leavers and /or housing services where the young person resides to explore what accommodation options may be available to them. Under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 a care leaver can claim a local connection to a local authority area in which they were normally resident for a continuous period of two years, at least some of which fell before their 16th birthday, as a result of being looked after by that local authority. This connection lasts until their 21st birthday.

Care Leavers leaving custody

Young people aged 17 and approaching 18 who are open to Youth Justice, the Cared For Children and Leaving Care are all discussed at a monthly multi-agency meeting which is in place to ensure all accommodation, service identification and

education/employment issues are being addressed and ensure a smooth transition to adulthood.

Young people aged over 18 who are eligible for Leaving Care services and also open to either Youth Justice, Probation or the Community Rehabilitation Company and who require accommodation upon their exit from custody will require a multi-agency response to assess all accommodation options and seek support from Housing Options should this necessity arrive.

The Youth Justice Social Worker in the Leaving Care Service should be aware of all care leavers on the Youth Justice caseload and will supervise many of these directly.

- Upon allocation of a case it is the responsibility of the allocated Youth Justice professional to access the Social Care case-record to confirm the status of the young person and note this plus the name of the relevant PA on the Youth Justice Case-Management System, Childview.
- The Youth Justice case-manager is responsible for contacting the appropriate PA to arrange a Care Planning meeting within 10 days of allocation. They must also invite the PA to any Case Planning Forums, Detention and Training Order or Remand meetings.
- The Youth Justice case-manager also needs to ensure that the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) is involved and informed so they are kept fully up to date with any significant changes in the Care Plan.
- The Youth Justice case-manager is responsible for sharing assessments of Risk and Vulnerability (Safety & Well-Being) with Children's Services and/or The Leaving Care Service to support with the continued planning for the care leaver.
- When a child enters custody the allocated Social Worker, Personal Advisor and Youth Justice case-manager need to work together from the outset to plan for the resettlement of the young person in the community. Contingency planning should also take place, to ensure in cases where the young person is released from custody, that early plans are in place to ensure a smooth transition.
- Prior to any child being released from custody there will be a discharge planning meeting (or equivalent) involving all key professionals who will be supporting the young person including the IRO. Particular consideration needs to be given to where the young person will live and to ensure that resettlement remains at the forefront of the young person's sentence or remand plan. Consequently, each young person placed in custody will be referred to and monitored through the Children's Accommodation and Resettlement Panel (CARP). This will ensure that the educational, accommodation and wider resettlement needs of each young person will be reviewed and that at least 6 weeks prior to their release date a referral will be made by the allocated Social Worker to the

Centralised Placement Team. Any concerns relating to gaps in care planning should be flagged with a more senior manager and escalated where appropriate.

- Alongside the CARP process all resettlement plans are presented to the Edge of Care Panel which is chaired by a Senior Manager. If the plans are unclear or not in place, the chair will set actions for those professionals who are jointly responsible for managing the case.
- Due to the challenges faced by our older care experienced children, transitions to both Leaving Care Services and Probation are monitored with monthly multi agency tracking meetings established to ensure that transitions across services follow the guidance outlined via the Y2A (Youth to Adult) pathway between Youth Justice and Probation and the transitional pathways that exist for young people moving from Permanence to Leaving Care Services.

Care leavers with additional needs

Work is continuing from partners from Mental health and disabilities to make a pledge regarding their commitment to preventing homelessness for care leavers

We know that there is a gap with provision for young people with complex needs. Although their needs are best met in the community with a package of support, some accommodation providers are overwhelmed when a number of young people require specific and intensive support. We need to ensure that they have a robust move on plan for accommodation following hospital discharge, as young people can be assessed as not meeting criteria for specialist provision.

Specifically, in relation to young people with mental health the following can be considered:

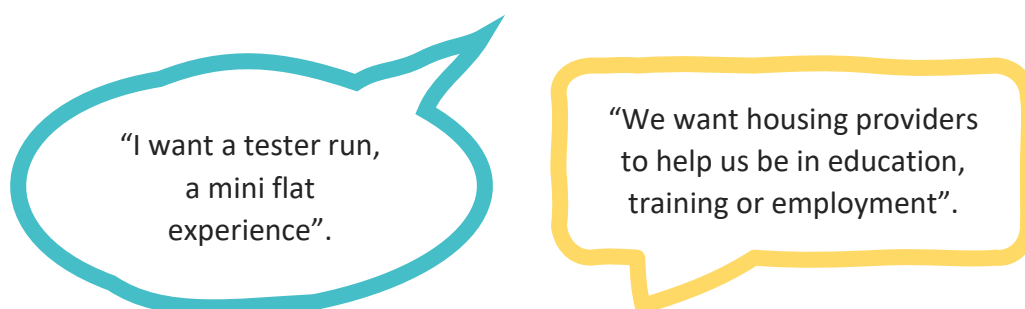
- There is a need for consistent accommodation to enable the young person to establish relationships which are likely to be key in helping manage their mental health needs in a community setting. We know that good working relationships are key to successful recovery and long-term wellbeing.
- We want to promote trauma informed care within the schemes/ accommodation providers. Centrepoint have a psychologist that are based with them.
- CAMHS consultation takes place with PA's at the beehive. This offers support to PA's with their young people up to 25, however if mental health presentation is persistent, then there may be a need for secondary care MH services.
- For care leavers suffering from poor mental health, there may be those who cannot manage in ordinary accommodation but require specialist accommodation due to their mental disorder. Such young people would need

to be found to have eligible needs under the Care Act or s117 aftercare, and their assessment provides sound evidence for a need for specialist provision,

- The process for securing specialist accommodation for MH would be on the basis of a Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) assessment. This assessment should take place before the age of 18, so that plans can be made in good time and the young person themselves is prepared and supported through that transition. The application would be made to the social care panel for MH via the care coordinator in the CMHT

Young people 18 – 25 homeless/risk of homelessness

When accommodations options have broken down, young people may need support from leaving care in an emergency. They may have not been ready for the accommodation they wanted or have found themselves unable to cope. Their PA will be in regular contact with young people and will try and help to solve problems before they get to the point of crisis. The Specialist Housing PA will provide support around tenancy maintenance and multi-agency partners to support



6. Joint working to deliver homelessness duties

This protocol sets out how we will plan and meet the housing needs of young people who are leaving care. The expectation is that care leavers will not need to engage with homelessness services in order to access accommodation and support. The homelessness legislation provides a safety net for people who are at a crisis point, and care leavers in Manchester will never be treated as being a homeless person at the point of transition when their care placement comes to an end. The approach to pathway planning, preparation for transitions and joint working to deliver support which is set out above will allow us to achieve this.

On occasion, a care leaver may experience a crisis or unforeseen event that would lead to them becoming homeless or threatened with homelessness and would require an immediate housing response. In these circumstances homelessness services and children's services will work together to ensure that the homelessness crisis can be prevented or relieved as quickly as possible.

Duty to Refer

From 1 October 2018, the Duty to Refer places a duty on some public authorities to refer service users who think they may either be threatened with homelessness or are homeless to the local authority housing services.

These public bodies are:

- prisons
- young offender institutions
- secure training centres
- secure colleges
- youth offending teams
- probation services (including community rehabilitation companies)
- job centres in England
- social service authorities (both adult and children's)
- emergency departments
- urgent treatment centres
- hospitals in their function of providing inpatient care
- Secretary of State - armed forces

Children's Services will meet the statutory duty to refer into Housing Teams (with consent from the young person) where the person is threatened with homelessness within 56 days, and they have not been successful in resolving the housing situation. Please note- this can be done to any local authority.

https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/legal/homelessness_applications/homelessness_duty_to_refer/public_authority_duty_to_refer

Referral to the homelessness service

When a care leaver aged 18-25 years old is identified as being threatened with homelessness or is actually experiencing homelessness the personal advisor (PA) will refer to the council's homelessness services using the duty to refer arrangements and the young person will be supported by their PA to make a homelessness application. This process will only be engaged in the event where an unforeseen event or crisis occurs which results in the young person becoming threatened with homelessness within 56 days, or where they are experiencing homelessness. It is not part of the planned routes into housing for young people who are leaving care.

A referral to the homelessness service via the duty to refer arrangements can be made here: [Duty to Refer](#)

In Manchester the statutory homelessness assessment service is delivered by the Housing Solutions Service. There is a specialist team for young people within the

Housing Solutions Service, the Young Persons Assessment Team (YPAT) The team can be contacted at 0161 234 1084.

When a duty to refer notification for a young person is made by their PA, this will be Young Persons Assessment Team, who will arrange for an assessment to be completed.

Assessment and Personalised Housing Plan

The assessment will determine the duty owed to the young person under Part 7 Housing Act 1996 and the outcome of this assessment will be issued to the young person in writing. The housing solutions officers will also work with the young person to develop and agree a personal housing plan. This plan will set out the reasonable steps that the young person and the council will both be required to take to either prevent homelessness from occurring, or to help the young person to secure alternative accommodation to relieve a homelessness situation as quickly as possible.

The PA should be involved in the homelessness assessment process and should provide a copy of the care leavers pathway plan, subject to their consent. The care leavers pathway plan should be used to inform the reasonable steps that are included in the homelessness personal housing plan, as this will ensure that any steps taken to prevent homelessness or steps to give support to secure alternative accommodation will be reasonable and achievable and will reflect what has already been set out in the care leaver pathway plan.

The housing solutions team will issue a decision in writing to set out what duties are owed under Part 7 Housing Act 1996. They will also provide a copy of the personalised housing plan and keep this under review throughout the time that a homelessness duty is in place. The team will also provide housing advice to the young person, issue all statutory notifications to accept or discharge a duty, explore all housing options including making referrals to supported accommodation and, where required, make arrangements for temporary accommodation placements.

Our intention is to avoid the use of B&B accommodation for care leavers. This type of accommodation will not be used, unless in an emergency, and then only for the shortest time possible whilst arrangements are made to secure suitable temporary accommodation.

Intentionally Homelessness Decisions

Where a care leaver has deliberately done something, or deliberately failed to do something that has directly led to them becoming homeless, they may be considered to be intentionally homeless. This could have the effect of limiting the duty that is owed to them under Part 7 Housing Act 1996. All reasonable attempts possible will be made to avoid the impact of intentionally homeless decisions on care leavers aged 18-25 and the expectation is that the council will be able to positively meet the duty to prevent

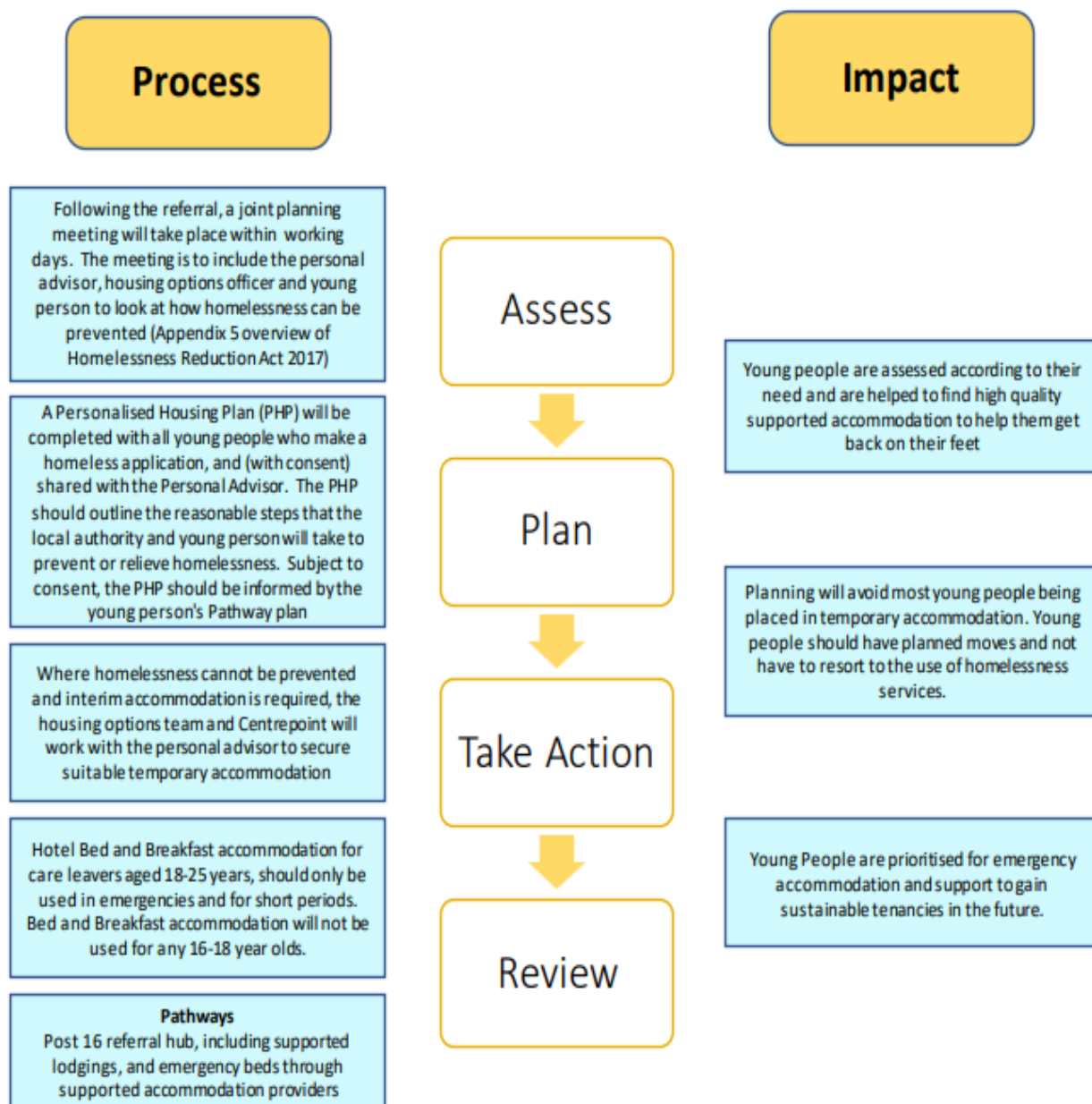
or relieve homelessness and help the young person to secure suitable accommodation before an intentionally homeless decision would be required.

All Intentionally Homeless decisions must be informed by a Permanency Planning Meeting chaired by the Assistant Director of Cared for Children and Leaving care or Assistant Director of Homelessness. The chair will need to be assured that all options have been exhausted and shared learning disseminated across the partnership.

Young people who are rough sleeping

There is a specialist outreach and support service in place for young people aged 18-25 who experience rough sleeping in Manchester or who are at imminent risk of sleeping rough. Manchester City Council funds two specialist outreach workers hosted in the Centrepoint services. These workers identify and provide support to young people who are sleeping rough, finding them short term emergency and supported accommodation, and linking them in with wider support such as substance misuse and mental health services. Regular outreach sessions are delivered by the Centrepoint workers, linking in with the Councils Outreach/Inreach team and other partner services who deliver outreach in the city to ensure that an effective multi-agency approach is in place.

A direct accommodation offer for young rough sleepers is in place, with eight spaces available across four 2 bed houses. This accommodation focuses on prevention and recovery and allows for young people with lower needs who are threatened with, or who have experienced rough sleeping to access short-term accommodation and be linked in with other specialist services, including employment support. Move-on is primarily into the private rented sector with specialist resettlement and floating support in place. Priority access to commissioned supported accommodation is also available for young rough sleepers with more complex needs.



7. Dispute Resolution

Any difference of opinion over areas of responsibility, proposed actions or exceptions to the above should initially be dealt with by the caseworker in each directorate. If the issue cannot be resolved at this level, the matter should be referred jointly to the housing solutions manager and the service manager at leaving care for a decision. These escalations routes need to be clearly recorded in the child's file with senior managers responsible for justifiable decision making

The young person should be at the heart of all that we do and when services are in conflict about what should happen, the young person should always be consulted

about what their preferences are. We must act ultimately in their best interest, but we should not presume that we will always know what that looks like for the young person. We are committed to advocacy services through Conran Voice, but we need to make sure that all young people are accessing the service if threatened with homelessness.

It is challenging to work with limited resources and unprecedented demand on housing services and this can lead to stresses for individual workers and managers. Through the protocol, all agencies are stating their intent to work together and think differently.

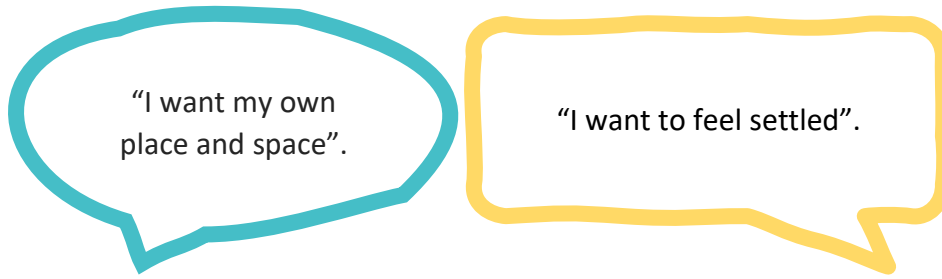
8. Summary

Our 'proud' moments, what we have achieved so far:

- A strong established partnership accommodation network
- A vastly improved number of care leavers finding their forever home with priority on Manchester Move
- 3 Cohorts of young people being supported into their forever home with the house project. Excellent tenancy training delivered to all those in the scheme. The Greater Manchester House Project is being hosted by Manchester Council and is currently working with 44 young people
- We have seen growth following the Staying Close grant, we are now providing additional support to young people moving into independence, therapeutic support and bespoke pre tenancy work.
- Young people gaining experience and knowledge in a safe way through living at the Beehive in high quality flats
- The majority of young people are now accommodated within our 16+ Preferred Providers cohort.
- 16+ referral route to ensure that young people are offered high quality supported accommodation that prepares them to achieve and thrive for when they are ready for their forever home.

What we know we need to do better and are committed to achieving:

- Joint funding to secure suitable emergency accommodation for those young people who need it
- Better joint assessment process to ensure that all our young people have a housing assessment and personal housing plan if threatened with homelessness
- Joint reviews of our data systems across services to have a better understanding of the needs of our young people.
- One high quality tenancy training program rolled out to all care leavers
- To ensure all young people are offered advocacy services when faced with homelessness



Date to be reviewed – January 2024

Senior leaders who will be responsible for ensuring the application of the protocol are;

- Emma Collingwood - Assistant Director of Cared for Children and Leaving Care
- Sean Bleasdale
- Sarah McEntree – Service Lead Leaving Care
- Liz Perry – Service Lead Supported Accommodation and New Arrivals Team

These leaders will be answerable to the Corporate Parenting Cooperative and our young people. In reviewing this protocol leaders will be responsible for consultation with young people and have a commitment to future documents being coproduced.