

# Developing **Positive** **Pathways** to Adulthood:

**Supporting young people** on their journey to economic independence and success through housing advice, options and homelessness prevention



This Positive Pathway Framework has been developed with the advice of local authorities, social landlords, homelessness agencies and young people. It is based on national data and research, policy direction, what works well and learning from visits to local authorities and other agencies

It builds on the 2012 Government report on homelessness 'Making Every Contact Count'<sup>1</sup> and also draws on the key themes and messages from the Government's 2015 report 'Addressing Complex Needs: Improving services for vulnerable homeless people'<sup>2</sup>. It does not, however, represent Government view or policy on young people or homelessness.

The framework within this report promotes a positive pathway to adulthood. The rationale is aligned to that of the Public Sector Transformation programme.

Please note that Barnardo's and St Basil's have also developed a specific Care Leaver Accommodation Pathway framework to be launched in September 2015.

Please contact Anna Whalen (anna.whalen@stbasils.org.uk) or Val Keen (val.keen@stbasils.org.uk), the Youth Homelessness Advisers working for St Basils, if you wish to feedback or ask any questions about the content of this document.

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<sup>1</sup> 2012 "Making Every Contact Count – A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness" published by the Department for Communities and Local Government August 2012.

<sup>2</sup> See [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/417230/150325\\_Addressing\\_Complex\\_Needs\\_-\\_final\\_publication\\_amended.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/417230/150325_Addressing_Complex_Needs_-_final_publication_amended.pdf)

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## I) Introduction

The Positive Pathway is a flexible framework for local authorities and their partners to use locally to provide a planned approach to homelessness prevention and housing for young people. It aims to help public service commissioners and providers of services to work together in planning and delivering services for young people recognising that safe, decent and affordable housing underpins achievement of other positive outcomes - whether these relate to education, training, employment, health, or safer communities. The Positive Pathway framework does not look at housing and homelessness in isolation. Its aim is to assist joint planning, commissioning and delivery of services to achieve outcomes across a range of domains for some of the most vulnerable groups of young people.

St Basils has worked with the Department for Communities and Local Government on prevention of youth homelessness since 2008 and as part of that work we developed the first Positive Pathway model and document in 2012, in consultation with local authorities and leading practitioners. This revised Positive Pathway framework document has, like the original one, been developed through a combination of learning from what works well already, research, consultation and thinking about how to best respond to changes in policy and in practice.

The 2012 Positive Pathway framework has served as a guide for local authorities to implement effective services in their local areas, to reduce youth homelessness and assist some of the most vulnerable young people in our society to re-engage with education, training and move towards economic independence. In 2014, 50% of local authorities responding to a national survey on youth homelessness said they had or were in the process of developing a Positive Pathway<sup>3</sup>.

There has been significant progress over the last few years in England to improve homelessness prevention and outcomes for young people who do become homeless. Innovative, cost effective solutions are being developed all the time by local authorities, housing associations and other agencies. Some local areas are reshaping and integrating local services for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who, at the point of transition to adulthood, need advice and support, not just around accommodation options, but other elements of their lives as they become more independent.

But things never stand still and three years after the development of the Pathway as a national framework, in summer 2015 we think it is timely to review and update it. A substantial amount

of information on how local authorities have developed their Pathways has been collected and considered, and some areas for improvement identified. In addition there have been continual changes in national policy and legislation and significant new challenges relating to public sector funding and service provision.

The principles and rationale for this framework are aligned to the Public Service Transformation agenda<sup>4</sup>. The framework is based on:

- Successful outcomes for young people - many of whom have multiple and complex needs - across a range of areas of their lives
- Organising services around young people's journeys and what they say makes the difference
- An integrated approach from the public sector - from commissioning through to service delivery
- What already works well - and recognising the challenges ahead
- Systems thinking - how to prevent homelessness and plan more effectively together
- Sharing of data and better use of technology

In every area there are some young people who need additional support to have a successful transition to adulthood. But others have a straightforward housing need which, if not addressed, could 'tip into' homelessness and all the difficulties that can present. Local authorities, education and training agencies, local NHS services, the National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Companies can all have a part to play in improving local responses if longer term costs are to be avoided and improved outcomes achieved.

There are some policy shifts which are likely to change the landscape of housing and homelessness prevention amongst under 21 year olds. The Government has announced its intention to implement specific welfare reforms focused on young people from April 2017:

- Put in place a new 'Youth Obligation' for 18-21 year olds on Universal Credit. Young people will be required to participate in an intensive regime of support from day one of their benefit claim and after 6 months they will be expected to apply for an apprenticeship or traineeship, gain work based skills or undertake a mandatory work placement.
- Remove automatic entitlement to housing support for new claims in Universal Credit from 18-21 year olds who are out of work. There will be exemptions for certain groups of young people including for 'vulnerable young people, those who may not be able to return home to live with their parents, and those who have been in work for 6 months prior to making a claim, who will continue to be able to receive housing support for up to 6 months while they look for work.' At the time of writing the details

of exemptions are yet to be finalised.

Our thinking has been shaped by this direction of travel, even though the details have yet to be developed. As employment becomes even more important to young people's ability to secure accommodation outside the family home the risk of young people finding themselves staying in unsafe places may increase. Local partnerships will increasingly need to identify and help safeguard young people at risk and to provide effective support for progression into learning work alongside housing support.

The revised Framework advocates moving from a 'deficit' response where the housing needs of young people are often only addressed when a young person is in the throes of a homelessness crisis, to a much more pro-active, 'early help', housing options based approach. This is not about encouraging young people to leave home at an early age. It's about giving parents and young people the relevant and realistic information they need to come to their own decisions. Evidence shows that young people are staying at home longer where this is an option. Understanding what the housing options are in each area and being able to plan for the future is important for all young people and their families. Identifying gaps in supply and meeting the needs of those who have no option to remain at home is a key role for public authorities and housing providers.

The revised Positive Pathway framework outlined below proposes a universal offer of access to information and advice for young people and their families or carers to help them understand the housing options available and to inform decisions they make. For those at risk of homelessness or

unable to meet their housing needs through their own resources and networks there is a need to advise, assist and provide access to planned options at an early stage before crises emerge. For those facing homelessness there is an integrated service response, with access to a range of supported housing options via a targeted and integrated service gateway.

Each element of the framework provides an opportunity for local authorities and their partners to examine and analyse data about who will require targeted or responsive services, what is the most effective method of delivery, how to improve primary and secondary prevention of homelessness and enable more families and young people to take advantage of universal options. This is an iterative process that benefits from a cycle of monitoring, analysis, review and revision underpinned by clarity about intended outcomes.

In drawing up this revised version of the Positive Pathway framework we have consulted with a number of local authorities, youth homelessness agencies, national homelessness organisations, housing associations, researchers and the Department for Communities and Local Government<sup>5</sup>. In addition we have consulted with young people from the National Youth Reference Group.<sup>6</sup> We want to thank everyone for their help. Their combined advice, sharing of expertise and positive support for this revised version has been very informative and served to shape our thinking on the changes needed.

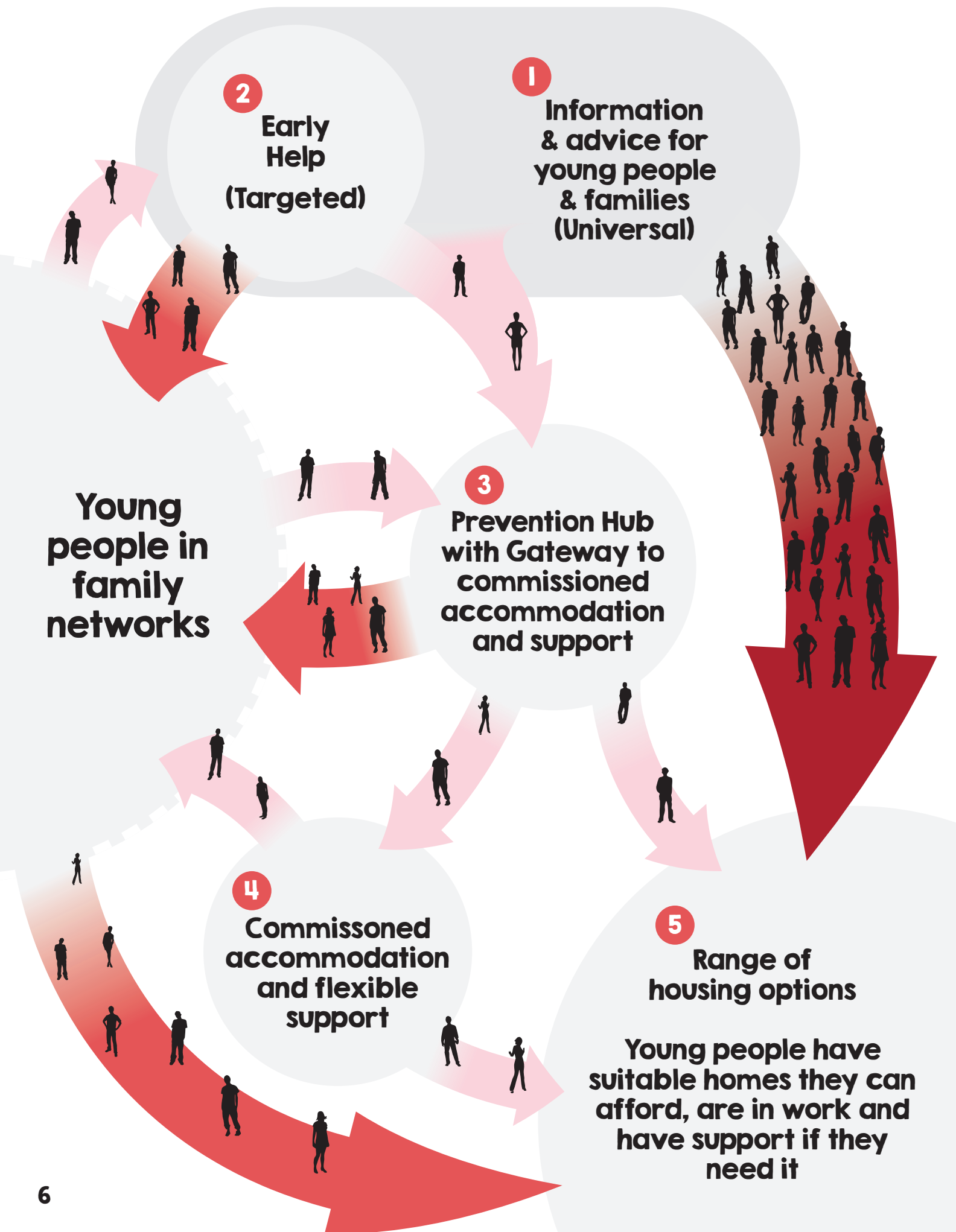
<sup>3</sup> Homeless Link 2014 Young and Homeless survey, see <http://www.homeless.org.uk/facts/our-research/young-and-homeless-research>

<sup>4</sup> See <http://publicservicetransformation.org> for more information, latest Government commissioned reports and examples.

<sup>5</sup> St Basils, Depaul UK, Centrepoin, South London YMCA, local authorities ( RB Greenwich, Brighton and Hove, Lincolnshire, Stoke on Trent, Blackpool, NE Lincs, Somerset, North Yorkshire, Birmingham) Homeless Link, Crisis, Shelter, Department for Communities and Local Government

<sup>6</sup> The National Youth Reference Group (NYRG) is a group of young people across England who have all experienced homelessness and together offer their advice, expertise and learning to organisations wishing to improve services to young people at risk of homelessness. NYRG is funded by DCLG and coordinated by St Basils

# Positive Pathway Model



## Positive Pathway Framework: The 5 Service Areas

### 1 Information and advice for young people and families

**The Service:** Timely, accurate information and advice about housing options available to everyone, delivered in a range of ways including web-based information and through schools to reach young people, families and professionals.

**Desired result:** Young people and families are empowered to plan transitions to independent living without support from specialist services. They understand the links between housing choice and their financial end employment situation. They know where to get help if they need it.

### 2 Early help

**The Service:** Early intervention targeted to reach households where young people are most likely to be at risk of homelessness, in addition to 1). Delivery involving all local services working with young people and families at risk, e.g. Troubled Families programme, Family Support, Youth Support and Youth Offending Services.

**Desired result:** Young people stay in the family network where possible and safe and are supported to make planned moves if they need to move out.

### 3 Integrated response ('hub' or 'virtual hub') and gateway to commissioned accommodation and support

**The Service:** Led by the Housing Authority and Children's Services, an integrated service for young people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or need help with planned transitions to independence. Housing options and homelessness prevention services come together, often co-located, with other services including support for pathways into learning and work. Underpinned by assessment and including a needs driven gateway into commissioned supported accommodation and flexible housing related support services. Key data collection point to inform ongoing development of the pathway.

**Desired results:**

- Homelessness is prevented wherever possible, for example by supporting young people to stay in their family network or preventing the loss of a tenancy.
- Young people who need accommodation and/or support get it, including quick access emergency accommodation and immediate and ongoing support where needed.
- Young peoples' accommodation and support underpins rather than disrupts their pathways in learning and work.

### 4 Commissioned accommodation and support

**The service:** A range of accommodation and support options designed for younger and more vulnerable young people. Accommodation and support is linked together in some options, for example supported accommodation, Foyers, supported lodgings and Housing First. Flexible outreach support is also available to support young people wherever they live (including in the family home) and stick with them when they move if needed.

**Desired results:** Young people gain the stability and skills they need, engage with learning and work and move on to greater independence.

### 5 Range of Housing Options

**The service:** A range of safe, decent, affordable housing options, shared and self-contained, in the private, social and third sectors. Where the market doesn't provide sufficiently for young people on low incomes the offer will need to be shaped through local housing strategies, using partnerships to create options. May include creative approaches such as partnerships with learning providers and employers to provide dedicated accommodation that underpins participation in learning and work. Access to flexible outreach support (4) in case young people need it.

**Desired results:** Young people are economically active and have suitable homes that they can afford - they can build for their future.

### 3) The picture in 2015

In the housing market, young people face greater economic disadvantage than any other group; their incomes are often low as they continue education and/or start out in work, they lack experience in finding and sustaining accommodation and are more likely to experience discrimination by landlords due to age associated perceptions about a range of risks as prospective tenants.

Overall housing patterns amongst young people have shifted significantly over the last 8 years. More young people are remaining in the parental home for longer, or returning back to the parental home<sup>7</sup>. This increased by 25% between 1996 and 2013. In addition to this, there was a 43% rise between 2008/09 to 2012/13 in young people aged 16 – 24 renting in the private sector. Social housing tenure as a housing option has diminished over the same period for this age group by 23%, and owner occupation has declined by 37%<sup>8</sup>. These patterns are not expected to change in the foreseeable future<sup>9</sup>, although there are some policy changes to support owner occupation amongst first time buyers.

On the supply side, leading homelessness agencies<sup>10</sup> are continuing to monitor the impact of welfare reform, in particular a range of changes to levels of Housing Benefit<sup>11</sup> which has further diminished the supply of affordable housing in the private rented sector available to young people on low incomes.

In some regions, in particular in London and in some parts of the South East and South West, there are very few opportunities for young people on low incomes to access the private rented sector, despite the best efforts of agencies to offer private landlords additional incentives. The Shared Accommodation Rate combined with reductions to the level of housing benefit payable locally is reported by both Crisis<sup>12</sup> and Homeless Link<sup>13</sup> to be having a significant impact on the availability of private rented accommodation, and in particular on the under 25 year old group, who are reported to be being displaced out of the market by the 26-35 year old group.

Within the overall 16 – 24 cohort are a group of young people who have been identified by housing academics as having 'chaotic' housing pathways, who are in part identified through their experience of homelessness. By 2020 this group is predicted to include 81,000 18 – 24

year olds across the UK<sup>14</sup> who are unable to access long term settled accommodation and will be living in the bottom end of the private rented sector, experiencing difficulty in maintaining their tenancies. Beyond homelessness prevention and small-scale initiatives in local areas, there is an absence of coherent pro-active housing policy for this group.

In terms of youth homelessness, patterns and reporting are varied across the country but based on statutory reporting and a Homeless Link survey in 2014, the overall position appears to be steady at the moment.<sup>15</sup> This does not factor in the more difficult to measure elements of homelessness which is hidden, such as sofa surfing. In August 2014, 39% of local authorities reported a decline in youth homelessness presentations, 35% reported no change and 26% said there had been an increase. Statutory homelessness amongst young people aged 16/17 is decreasing, against a backdrop of an overall increase in all statutory homelessness. However, the numbers of young people who are care leavers being accepted as being statutorily homeless has been rising slowly but persistently<sup>16</sup>.

The decline in 16/17 year old acceptances is in part due to improved joint prevention work between Housing Authorities and Children's Services, but is also explained by an increase in young people aged 16/17 becoming looked after as a result of homelessness<sup>17</sup> with an overall rise of 22% in the number of 16/17 year olds becoming looked after between 2012/13 and 2013/14. In addition there are anecdotal reports from some local authorities of a slowing down of parental eviction amongst young people, in part attributed to the risk of under-occupation penalties if a young person leaves an empty bedroom in social housing.

Rough sleeping amongst young people in London rose by 5% between 2012/13 and 2013/14<sup>18</sup>, to 762 under 25 year olds. There is no counting by age of rough sleepers outside London but the overall rough sleeping trend is upward, with a reported rise in England of 14% in the autumn of 2014 from the previous year<sup>19</sup>.

It is likely that statutory homelessness acceptances will rise amongst young people aged 18 – 25, given changes to the test of vulnerability in May 2015 through the Johnson, Hotak and Kanu cases (see footnote 23).

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/family-demography/young-adults-living-with-parents/2013/index.html>

<sup>8</sup> See D Quilgars and J Rugg in Youth and Policy May 2015: <http://www.youthandpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/rugg-quilgars-young-people-and-housing1.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> See David Clapham et al, Cardiff University and Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2012 [http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/young-people-housing-options-full\\_0.pdf](http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/young-people-housing-options-full_0.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> For example, Crisis, Homeless Link and Shelter

<sup>11</sup> The main changes are: the Shared Accommodation Rate, which limits the amount of housing benefit payable for private rented accommodation to a room in a shared house and has been extended from under 25s age group to under 35s; the level at which local housing allowance is determined having moved from the 50th to the 30th percentile, reducing the number of affordable properties/rooms available to those in receipt of Housing Benefit in any local area; and in social housing, the under occupation rules from April 2013 leading to a reduction in the amount of available single person accommodation as people downsize from larger properties.

<sup>12</sup> Crisis publication: No Room Available 2012 a study of the availability of shared accommodation

<sup>13</sup> Homeless Link, 'Nowhere to Move; Is renting on the Shared Accommodation Rate affordable in London?' May 2013

<sup>14</sup> See David Clapham et al, Cardiff University and Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2012 [http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/young-people-housing-options-full\\_0.pdf](http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/young-people-housing-options-full_0.pdf)



The judgment is expected to lead to more single young people without dependents being accepted by local authorities as being owed the main homelessness duty on the basis of vulnerability. A group of young people who are homeless and largely previously hidden may be about to emerge.

In some areas the result of the above changes is likely to be an increase in young people remaining for long periods in high cost supported accommodation, because they have nowhere to move on to due to lack of affordable supply. This "silt up" of supported accommodation can lead to some local authorities placing young people into bed and breakfast accommodation, which is always deemed to be unsuitable.

But the major policy change which is predicted to significantly impact on overall youth homelessness – statutory and non-statutory – is the removal of automatic entitlement to Housing Benefit for 18 – 21 year olds and the replacement of JSA with a new Youth Allowance. There are no details on these proposed changes beyond the understanding that some groups are likely to be exempt including single parents and care leavers. Future planning for positive transitions for young people will need to take account of the impacts of such policy changes and mitigate against the risk of undermining progress in other areas of youth policy.

There are an estimated 11,449 social tenants aged 18-21<sup>20</sup> who may be affected by changes to Housing Benefit. There is no data available on the impact of those in private rented accommodation. From both practical and policy perspectives, where these young people would realistically go and the knotty interplay between legislation on welfare, homelessness, housing and children/young people has yet to be detailed.

In the absence of more positive options for disadvantaged young people, experiencing crisis and becoming homeless is likely to continue to be a well-trodden path unless new approaches are developed which open up more planned pathways into truly affordable, safe and decent accommodation, enabling young people to take up employment, training, or further or higher education.

In spite of all the challenges and pressures above, the changes locally and nationally, and the unknowns ahead, there are real positives to draw on. Let's not forget the innovation, the strategic 'join up' and the focus on improving prevention of youth homelessness nationally and across so many areas of England. More so than ever before we will need to draw on what works well and collaborate to keep young people out of homelessness and moving forward positively.

<sup>15</sup> See pages 16 – 18 of the 2014 'Young and Homeless' survey report published by Homeless Link: <http://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/201411%20-%20Young%20and%20Homeless%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> See the statutory homelessness (P1E) returns at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/homelessness-statistics>

<sup>17</sup> The G v Southwark ruling 2009 clarified that children's law takes precedence over housing law in the case of homeless 16-17 year olds. However the rise is not all due to homelessness, other factors include being looked after due to being remanded. See the Department for Education, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/359277/SFR36\\_2014\\_Text.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/359277/SFR36_2014_Text.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Chain data from St Mungo's Broadway see <http://www.mungosbroadway.org.uk/chain>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-in-england-autumn-2014>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/policy/welfare-reform/benefit-cut-could-hit-11400-tenants/7009784.article>

## 4) Why has the Positive Pathway changed<sup>21</sup>?

Three key drivers have shaped our thinking on the changes we have made. The first and second relate to 'what' needs to change and the third is more of a 'how to change' driver.

Firstly our systems for addressing housing need amongst young people are predicated on crisis. Despite knowing that young people will make some sort of transition to adulthood and for some this will be harder than others, we still largely wait for the crisis to happen before services are offered. It is not really a surprise that young people under 25 are significantly over-represented in homelessness activity in local authorities, with a recent survey showing that around 30% of all homelessness presentations and 59% of those living in supported accommodation are under 25<sup>22</sup>. We have, with the best of intentions, developed a system to help those in crisis but not really offered anything else alongside that.

It would be short sighted to assume things will remain relatively steady amongst young people, not only because of changes in policy and recent case law<sup>23</sup> but because in tight housing markets which are short on supply and especially hard to access for young people on low incomes, presenting in crisis is still the default position. More so than ever before concerted prevention activity, backed by some realistic housing options and effective support for progression in learning and work, is required.

Secondly, local authorities and provider organisations have reported year on year that a higher proportion of young people becoming homeless or leaving care have multiple or complex needs<sup>24</sup>. Whilst the Government's Fair Chance Fund has been welcomed and will provide valuable learning about how to best support these young people, the issue remains a challenge in all areas of England. It is well understood that the support needed for this group to make a positive transition to adulthood is much more intensive than most 'housing related support' commissioned services, but how can services be better developed for this group given the huge pressures on local authority and wider public sector budgets?

Thirdly, the question of 'how' needed to be addressed most robustly. Failure to consider more the 'how' at a time of service reductions and changes in policy would be deeply unhelpful. There are major challenges to public

services in terms of budget pressures and reductions and an urgent need to work more effectively and efficiently. Those working on public policy and local commissioners have a clear understanding of the sort of outcomes that are needed to avoid a life of multiple exclusion. Joint planning and joint commissioning to achieve improvements and savings are arguably more critical than ever before.

A set of shared local outcomes is the starting place for joint working – and many authorities and their partners are already well underway with this. In the last part of this document and appendix 2 we suggest some possible outcomes in more detail, but from the outset our thinking is framed around the overarching outcome of young people being economically active. This underpins all other desired outcomes for young people. Financially independent young people who are in employment are more likely to:

- be healthy, both physically and emotionally
- have positive relationships
- stay safe and not be involved in criminal or anti-social behaviour
- be involved in meaningful, enjoyable activities
- make a positive contribution to their local community.

Housing and financial security go hand in hand. Without a decent, safe place to live, it is almost impossible to get ready for the world of work or hold down a job. Without financial security, young people have little prospect of living in decent, safe accommodation as young adults.

So we are suggesting a new approach to housing and young people – beyond the focus on youth homelessness to encompass a more positive and universal offer that can help more young people and their families avoid crisis and take more control over their pathways to independence. These three drivers and the changes needed are considered in more detail below.

<sup>21</sup> See Appendix One for the original version of the Positive Pathway

<sup>22</sup> 2014 'Young and Homeless' survey report published by Homeless Link: <http://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/201411%20-%20Young%20and%20Homeless%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf> based on responses from 96 housing authorities and 116 providers of supported accommodation

<sup>23</sup> May 2015 a Supreme Court ruling on the joined cases of Johnson, Kanu and Hotak have changed the vulnerability test for single 18s and over. Previously councils were treating as vulnerable only those people who were in a worse situation than others already living on the streets. They used statistics about the characteristics of the street homeless (relating to depression, drug abuse, etc) to see whether applicants were even more vulnerable than those already sleeping rough. The new test of vulnerability is if they are more likely to be harmed by the experience of being homeless than any ordinary person would be if they faced homelessness. No statistical comparison is necessary or relevant. The result is that many more homeless people are likely to be treated as being in priority need and as having a right to some accommodation.

<sup>24</sup> See page 34 of the 2014 'Young and Homeless' survey report published by Homeless Link: <http://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/201411%20-%20Young%20and%20Homeless%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf>

## 5) From the crisis response to planning for transitions

### Housing advice and options work

If we continue to shape services predicated on the crisis of homelessness, that's what we will get - more youth homelessness and the poor life outcomes that are associated with it. Through all of our learning, consultation and projecting ahead there is a clear message that we need to move beyond what is seen as a "deficit" approach to meeting young people's accommodation and support needs.

The 'deficit' model is framed around imminent or actual homelessness being the trigger to getting a response to housing need from local authorities and other service providers. We know that around 80% of young people try to resolve their housing problems and homelessness before they come to the local authority for help<sup>25</sup>. This suggests there is likely to be greater opportunity for successful resolution of housing need and homelessness if young people are encouraged to seek housing advice and support with homelessness prevention much earlier. Local authorities and their partners want to and can do things differently. But the big question is - how?

We suggest taking a more universal housing advice and options approach. This would mean that planners, housing strategists and providers would need to develop a broader, more appropriate universal housing offer for young people which encourages aspiration and employment alongside planning of housing pathways.

### Planning of housing options and opening up of supply

Housing should be an enabler, not a block to success. Safe, decent and affordable housing is a vital foundation stone for young people as they become young economically active adults. However, young peoples' routes to finding their own independent housing are getting more complex, taking longer and getting harder to navigate<sup>26</sup>. Local authorities also report that young people's expectations of their housing outcome - usually a flat of their own - are not based on the local reality of availability or affordability. This is the case even in London Boroughs, where there is much publicity and awareness of the shortage of housing.

Young people progress through all sorts of different situations; staying with parents, extended family or foster carers; living with friends; moving in with a

partner; going off to university or college; living in supported accommodation; sharing in private rented accommodation; taking out a mortgage or living in social housing. But what more can local authorities and their partners do to ensure housing choices genuinely exist for young people, choices that are decent, safe and affordable and support young people to be successful?

In terms of supply of housing the national picture is very varied. In some areas social housing is more readily available and can be accessed by some groups through additional preference in the local authority's Allocations Scheme - for example, young people leaving care and young people who are ready to move on from supported accommodation. In many areas there is an acute shortage of one-bed social housing<sup>27</sup> but some availability for those on low incomes to share in the private rented sector. In many areas there is a shortage of both social housing and private rented accommodation for young people on low incomes.

As a result of the factors above, combined with 41% of supported housing schemes reporting reductions in funding<sup>28</sup> and consequent reduced bedspaces, there are reports of increased 'silting up' in supported accommodation, with young people ready to move on but with no offer of settled accommodation.

Other options are being more readily considered as a consequence by many local authorities, including more 'step down' accommodation - which is another short term progression option, usually attached to the existing accommodation scheme, as a final step before a young person has their own independent tenancy. The use of the private rented sector as a move on option is increasingly prevalent, mirroring national trends<sup>29</sup>, usually sharing with others. In some areas, shared social housing is being developed for young people, maximising use of larger void stock or pro-actively developing this as an option in the absence of affordable and decent alternatives.

Re-thinking a universal offer to young people regarding housing options makes good strategic sense. But it does mean that those working on housing strategy, planning, allocations, access to the private rented sector and employment strategies will need to be part of the discussion and planning to develop supply options locally. There are a number of innovative schemes and useful learning from national pilots on young people sharing<sup>30</sup> to assist thinking. Examples of these are outlined later, in the description of the final element of the Positive Pathway.

<sup>25</sup> Suzanne Fitzpatrick and N Pleace et al, *Statutory Homelessness in England: The experience of families and 16-17 year olds*, DCLG, 2008 and also see Centrepoin's 2015 report, 'Out of Reach: Young People's Experience of Rough Sleeping and Sofa Surfing'

<sup>26</sup> See D Quilgars and J Rugg in *Youth and Policy* May 2015: <http://www.youthandpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/rugg-quilgars-young-people-and-housing1.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> One bed social housing that is 'general needs' and available to young people - i.e. not designated for older people

<sup>28</sup> *Support for Single Homeless People in England Review*, 2015

<sup>29</sup> See page 6 of D Quilgars and J Rugg in *Youth and Policy* May 2015: <http://www.youthandpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/rugg-quilgars-young-people-and-housing1.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> See *Crisis toolkits on opening up access to the Private Rented sector for young people*: [www.crisis.org.uk/.../Private\\_Rented\\_Sector/Toolkit/PRS\\_Toolkit.pdf](http://www.crisis.org.uk/.../Private_Rented_Sector/Toolkit/PRS_Toolkit.pdf)

and their evaluation and toolkit from the 'Sharing Solutions' programme: see <http://www.crisis.org.uk/pages/sharing-solutions-programme.html> and the Government funded 'Platform for Life' programme: see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-change-and-platform-for-life-funds-2015-to-2017-prospectus>

## 6) Young people with multiple and complex needs

We know that homelessness at a young age is not usually just about lack of accommodation. The underlying causes often stem back to much earlier problems or factors in childhood. In a recent piece of significant national research<sup>31</sup> which maps severe and multiple disadvantage (defined as homelessness, involvement in the criminal justice system and substance misuse) 25% of adults interviewed with the most acute form of severe and multiple disadvantage were aged 18 – 25.

The research highlights the links between severe multiple disadvantage and childhood trauma, including abuse (sexual, physical, emotional and neglect), living with violence and substance misuse in the family home, running away from home, a parent with mental health problems, family homelessness, being in care and youth homelessness. 85% of all those interviewed had a range of these experiences. Other factors such as not going to school and school exclusion, involvement in the criminal justice system at a young age and mental health problems underpin the childhoods of many in this group.

Positive outcomes for this group are possible. The right help at the right time can transform young people's lives. The Fair Chance Fund evaluation will provide a wealth of learning which local commissioners can use to invest locally in what works well, because these are the very young people that all parts of the public sector acknowledge are the hardest to assist in achieving positive outcomes.

But in the meantime, most commissioners and providers in local areas would agree that there is a mismatch between needs and available services for this group. This is not only about preventing homelessness, but other negative outcomes – for example, poor health, NEET status and offending. How can those young people with multiple and complex needs, who can't live at home or stay in care get the right sort of accommodation and support to help them to succeed as young adults, avoiding the crisis of homelessness and having a more planned transition to adulthood?

## 7) Joint planning, joint commissioning, joint working

The most significant change to the framework is the emphasis on joint planning, joint commissioning and more joint working. The messages from Government<sup>32</sup> echo those of the Public Service Transformation Network – joint commissioning and working is not a 'nice to have' option but a necessity. All the evidence from examples we have visited and know of indicate that designing services around young people, which are jointly planned, commissioned and delivered, will improve outcomes across a range of domains and will save public money. See **Appendix 2** for an example of a shared outcomes framework that may be of interest as a starting point for increased service alignment or integration.

Leadership and strategy are often focused on taking a

more integrated course, but many services and systems continue to operate in their traditional spheres. We know the theory but, with a few exceptions, we are all so used to doing what we do in our own domains that it's hard to move into the real change necessary in practice:

The approach taken by the Troubled Families Programme nationally is being learnt from locally. Ideally the way forward to establish or improve on your local Pathway is to have a joined-up response to multi-faceted issues, with locally tailored joint commissioning across the public sector agencies that together are committed to a set of outcomes that are inter-dependent.

The challenge is how to move from single issue commissioning (for example, addressing NEET status,

“

**From an early age we are taught to break apart problems, to fragment the world. This apparently makes complex tasks and subjects more manageable, but we pay a hidden, enormous price... We tend to focus on snapshots of isolated parts of the system and wonder why problems never seem to get solved.**

”

**Peter Senge, Society for Organisational Learning.**

<sup>31</sup> G.Bramley and S.Fitzpatrick et al. 'Hard Edges – Mapping Severe and Multiple Disadvantage in England' published by Lankelly Chase Foundation 2015

<sup>32</sup> As set out in the Government's 2015 homelessness report, 'Addressing Complex Needs: Improving services for vulnerable homeless people' and response to the Public Service transformation Challenge Panel report, see [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/412950/Bolder\\_Braver\\_and\\_Better\\_-\\_why\\_we\\_need\\_local\\_deals\\_to\\_save\\_public\\_servi\\_\\_\\_\\_.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/412950/Bolder_Braver_and_Better_-_why_we_need_local_deals_to_save_public_servi____.pdf)

homelessness, housing related support, offending, leaving care, mental health), to more joint planning and commissioning across the whole of the Pathway. Can commissioners come together and do some 'nudging' - often in small, practical ways that explicitly recognise the inter-dependence between different 'single' outcomes and support the young person's journey to adulthood more seamlessly. Where this is working well there is a wealth of learning for other authorities.

The importance of collecting and analysing of data in joint working cannot be understated. It is the platform which guides planning, shapes commissioning, enables on-going analysis and understanding of impact across services and different groups of young people.

### **EXAMPLE: Joint commissioning of accommodation and support for young people in Brighton and Hove**

The background to Brighton and Hove developing joint commissioning was a shared recognition that there were lots of barriers to accessing housing for young people, including care leavers. A thorough needs assessment was undertaken in 2011. Amongst many issues, it showed that Children's Services and the Supporting People/housing related support commissioners were holding different contracts for the same services/bed spaces and there was little 'join-up' in thinking, planning or delivery. Based on the national 'Positive Pathway' model and addressing the issues raised in the needs assessment, a joint commissioning strategy was drawn up in 2013 to develop a Young People's Accommodation and Support Pathway.

There are agreed joint performance measures and outcomes in place, which tie into the Corporate Parenting strategy and changes with Early Help. There is also a single point of access into provision through the Housing Advice Service, a Supported Accommodation Panel and a revised Care Leaver's Protocol.

Newly commissioned services include priority for care leavers and a clear route for care leavers leaving foster placements or other Children's Services accommodation through the Care Leavers Protocol which ensures moves to accommodation are planned.

Joint commissioning will ensure provision of support for young people in independent tenancies as well as in accommodation projects or supported lodgings. A challenge is designing the future shape of services with a decreasing budget, but evidencing the impact through the Outcomes Framework, which includes specific care leaver indicators, ensures there is a good corporate understanding of the impact of the new approach.

### **EXAMPLE - The Camden Accommodation Pathway for young people**

Camden has commissioned an accommodation pathway that provides a range of supported accommodation for homeless young people, as a partnership between Supporting People; Housing Options; Children, Schools and Families; health; and third sector providers. Before the Young People's Pathway was implemented, housing services were commissioned by Supporting People alone and the grant conditions were a barrier to housing care leavers, meaning that the majority of care leavers were placed out of Camden. In 2007, a joint funding arrangement was made to commission supported accommodation services for young people aged 16 to 21. It includes three assessment centres, progress and specialist services (including mental health; sexual exploitation; and teenage parents) and move through services so young people can demonstrate they are ready for independent living. Key to delivering a successful range of supported accommodation has been flexibility and responsiveness from providers; a referral co-ordinator into the Pathway; a Team Around the Child approach; and effective partnership working across the borough.

## 8) Assumptions that underpin the Positive Pathway framework

- Young people are not a homogenous group; there is significant variation in the age at which they leave the parental home, the support parents/family provide, the type of accommodation they first move into and the reasons for moving out of the parental home.
- Most young people will only be able to afford to live independently if they are in employment or in work based training<sup>33</sup> unless they have additional financial support from their own parents/family or the local authority as a 'corporate parent'. Cost of living increases, benefit reductions in real terms and in particular the impending changes to welfare benefits for 18 to 21 year olds - the ending of automatic entitlement to housing benefit and the introduction of a Youth Obligation with stronger and more time limited conditionality than JSA - are all factors that contribute to this position.
- The housing market is not currently meeting the accommodation needs of young people on low incomes who are not able to live with family. Landlords are more likely to respond positively to this gap if confidence in local areas can be created through pro-actively offering an integrated pathway approach, tying in education, training and employment more closely with accommodation and more pro-actively preparing young people as young tenants – these approaches can lessen perceived and actual risks for both private and social landlords.
- Young people and their parents/carers need to be given clear information whilst young people are still at school/college about local housing options and the realities of living independently, in terms of affordability issues, local choice, hidden costs, sharing of accommodation and landlord expectations.
- Each local area has its own unique housing market conditions and will create local solutions to youth accommodation needs, based on local circumstances and opportunities.
- Accommodation should be safe, decent and affordable and its cost should not be a barrier for young people taking up training, apprenticeships or employment.
- The pathway should be a progression and help young people with their aspirations. But it also needs to allow for young people making mistakes as part of their learning, physiological development and experience as young adults.
- Mobility is critical for young people entering the world of further education, training and employment; issues of local connection in terms of access to accommodation should not perversely limit opportunities.
- Despite the housing shortage, there are opportunities to open up supply and develop new accommodation options for young people. For example, there are innovative approaches which need to be replicated, regarding sharing of social housing and supporting access to private rented accommodation.
- The homelessness route is a negative and stigmatising experience for young people and should be avoided wherever possible by the provision of a range of other more pro-active housing, support and advice options earlier on, to encourage young people with their parents/family to plan together and avoid crisis.
- It is usually the most vulnerable and disadvantaged young people who leave the family home earliest and with no support or option to return home. Local authorities, schools and other agencies already know which young people are at high risk of homelessness before they reach the age of 16. It is possible to prevent homelessness and plan with these families the routes young people will take if they cannot stay at home.
- An integrated approach locally is most likely to deliver effective prevention and successful transition support. There are a wide range of prospective partners, for example Children's Services Authorities or Trusts, Housing Authorities, housing associations, housing related support commissioners, Job Centre Plus, education and training providers, employers, specialist and primary health providers, National Careers Service, Youth Offending Services, Community Rehabilitation Companies, the Probation Service and voluntary sector providers.
- Different young people have different levels of need when they live independently of their families – a small minority need a period of intensive support to make a successful transition to adulthood, whilst others never need more than minimal "light touch" housing management support.
- A successful transition to adulthood for young people with multiple or complex needs requires an integrated approach from a range of agencies. Housing related support / Supporting People funded services alone are usually not able to meet the needs of those young people with a very high level of need.

<sup>33</sup> Note the detail of this welfare reform is not yet available but impacts could be significant – for example it is estimated that 11,449 young people in social housing will be affected (see Inside Housing, 14th May 2015).

## 9) What are the underpinning features of a positive pathway approach for young people?

Moving to a positive accommodation pathway approach draws on the rationale and principles set out in the Public Service Transformation approach at a local level to achieve a change in working practices and culture, to get better outcomes for young people and reduce the costs to the taxpayer. We know which factors make a real difference to the outcomes for disadvantaged young people:

- A whole systems, integrated approach to **preventing** youth homelessness in the first place and supporting, where necessary, young people's planned moves to independence through a **positive pathway**.
- Developing services and practices which **invest in universal housing options advice and targeted early intervention** rather than just reacting to crisis.
- Provision of seamless, easy to use services, making better use of scarce resources through **joining up and co-ordinating of services**. This includes pooling the budgets of agencies where it is effective to do so, and building on local knowledge, existing community assets and voluntary effort.
- Providing **information and advice** for young people and their families across all stages of the pathway, not only about housing, education training and employment but on other aspects of young people's lives as they make the transition to adulthood.
- **A progression to independence** for young people, through having a range of accommodation options to meet different needs and a continually strong focus on building up the skills, experience and motivation needed to ultimately gain employment.
- An ethos which places young people and their parents/families at the heart of planning and delivery – **significant, supportive relationships** with one or two skilled professionals are often the key for vulnerable young people making a successful transition
- **Involving young people** in how services are shaped and delivered, including as peer educators and supporters, can lead to excellence in provision and gives young people important learning opportunities for the future.
- Addressing the **supply conundrum of what is truly affordable, safe and decent accommodation** for young people with low incomes and time limited access to housing benefit assistance.

<sup>34</sup> See <http://publicservicetransformation.org>



# 10) The elements of the Positive Pathway framework

## 10.1 Information and advice for young people and families (a universal offer)

### **I Information and advice for young people and families**

**The Service:** Timely, accurate information and advice about housing options available to everyone, delivered in a range of ways including web-based information and through schools to reach young people, families and professionals.

**Desired result:** Young people and families are empowered to plan transitions to independent living without support from specialist services. They understand the links between housing choice and their financial and employment situation. They know where to get help if they need it.

### **What young people said:**

**“Life skills around housing options should be built into the school curriculum, having appropriate training in school would have helped me at 19 when I was facing homelessness”**

**“Raise awareness of the issues that lead to homeless, you do not just wake up homeless”**

**“Make young people aware of their rights - teach the law”.**

**“Lifeskills should be compulsory in PHSE<sup>35</sup>”.**

**“All staff should be trained”.**

**“Link issues between services”.**

### **The Service**

The offer in this part of the pathway might include:

- Housing options education work in schools and colleges as part of financial literacy curriculum work with young people. This could cover the reality of housing options/choices, the financial aspects of living independently, homelessness and how to avoid this – and critically where to go for early help and advice.
- Information and advice for parents and families to ensure their understanding of the housing options that are available and affordable to young people in their area is realistic and up to date.
- Information, advice and resources to promote understanding amongst professionals and volunteers working with young people regarding where to go for help and the realities of housing options and homelessness at a young age.

<sup>35</sup> This is now called Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) – it is a non statutory part of the curriculum currently but there is some pressure to make it compulsory following a Commons Education Committee report recommendation to do so.



## Considerations and tips

### Reaching young people

Feedback from young people<sup>36</sup> consistently says they want and need good information on housing options and the realities (not just on homelessness), but they do not usually get it at school.

The autonomy of schools and academies means there is likely to be a varied response to offers of education work on housing options and homelessness – other communication channels may need to be developed locally, for example high quality web based information, signposting to a telephone advice line if needed.

Any new offer or approach is likely to be more successful with educational establishments and more sustainable in the longer term if it links into the curriculum. Since September 2014 financial education has been embedded into the maths and citizenship curriculum, creating a new opportunity to achieve this. Alternatively collapsed timetable days – a new approach to delivering PSHE – is emerging in some schools, where regular lessons are replaced by a small number of full days each year to look at PHSE related issues, usually inviting external agencies into school to deliver information and advice to pupils. Housing options workshops could be included in these days.

This work could involve a number of stakeholders who have an interest in young people as successful tenants of the future – not just Housing Authorities but other social landlords, Children's Services and voluntary agencies. It could make longer-term business sense to jointly fund

or jointly support input into schools, academies and FE colleges, focusing on housing options and affordability as well as homelessness. This should not be all 'doom and gloom' and can be framed in an aspirational but realistic way focused on housing choice linked to pathways into economic activity. It also needs to include information about where to go for early advice/help.

Young people under the school leaving age who are not attending school or college have a higher risk of being homeless at a young age, so consideration is needed about how to reach them for example through Pupil Referral Units and other provisions.

Methods of communication include:

- Use of existing technology to get general advice and information across to young people via existing portals in schools, academies and FE colleges and local authority websites.
- Peer education, which can work well in a classroom setting. It has a high impact with young people who are able to ask questions directly and learn from a peer who has direct experience of homelessness.
- Theatre and discussion workshops, which can effectively engage young people.
- Short films featuring young peoples' voices which can be played as part of structured sessions with an external person/people running the session, or with a teacher who has had some briefing beforehand. The general feedback is that delivery by external agencies works better, but it is more costly in terms of time.

### **EXAMPLE - Until It's Gone - Theatre as a medium for highlighting youth homelessness in schools**

Since 2008 Zest Theatre Company has been working with local authorities in Lincolnshire and beyond (Poole, Peak District) to deliver a production dealing with the issues surrounding youth homelessness. Until It's Gone is a hard-hitting production for Key Stage 4 based on the true-life stories of homeless young people. The show and accompanying workshop lasts 1 hour and is for audiences aged 13-18 in schools, PRUs and other youth settings. The session gives young people the opportunity to explore a range of difficult and complicated issues in an innovative and accessible way. Zest has done annual evaluations since they began the work and young people feed back via Twitter. Information can be found on the ZEST website: [www.zesttheatre.com/current-productions/until-its-gone](http://www.zesttheatre.com/current-productions/until-its-gone)

<sup>36</sup> For example, the National Youth Reference Group – young people who have experienced homelessness themselves

## EXAMPLE - Peer education work in schools and college

St Basils have a well-established Schools Training and Mentoring Project (STaMP) which they use to engage with young people whilst they are still in school or education to:

- raise their awareness of the causes of homelessness
- help them understand the realities of housing options and difficulties of leaving home at a young age
- help them recognise the circumstances that can lead to youth homelessness
- give them information about where to go for help before situations escalate.

Young people from St Basils who have experienced homelessness themselves co-deliver the programme with staff. They are trained and externally accredited as peer educators. Information from evaluation shows the peer education element is the key success factor in increasing the learning and reality checking for young people. Young people are also offered a peer mentoring service if they need extra support.

### Reaching parents/carers

Many young people learn about their housing choices from their families, but parents and older family members may not be familiar with the new challenges within the housing market for young people e.g. welfare reform, limited choices for young people due to affordability and a tightening supply of social housing.

It can therefore be helpful to place information for both parents and young people on local authority and housing association websites and in leaflet format covering:

- Housing options for young people locally and the realistic affordability considerations
- Planning moves with young people leaving home
- Where to go for advice and support on housing issues
- Who to contact if a parent is finding things difficult with a teenage child

### Reaching other professionals

There is a lack of awareness amongst some professionals advising young people about the realities of leaving home at a young age (in particular, choice and affordability in

the longer term) and the options available when young people leave supported accommodation. It can be valuable to develop a short briefing that can be delivered periodically to teams working with young people and families covering:

- Housing options for young people, affordability and welfare reform challenges
- The negative impact of homelessness on young people and communities, including the types of risky situations young people with nowhere safe to stay may face
- The prevention approach and concept of the Positive Pathway
- The legal position
- The trigger /risk factors experienced by teenagers that can lead to homelessness later on.
- Sources of information, advice and specialist support available to young people and families.

## 10.2 Early Help (a targeted offer)

### 2 Early help

**The Service:** Early intervention targeted to reach households where young people are most likely to be at risk of homelessness, in addition to 1). Delivery involving all local services working with young people and families at risk, e.g. Troubled Families programme, Family Support, Youth Support and Youth Offending Services.

**Desired result:** Young people stay in the family network where possible and safe and are supported to make planned moves if they need to move out.

### What young people said:

**‘Who raises the alarm?’**

**‘Improve communication between health, youth services, schools/ colleges, family etc’**

**‘More integration between council services - has to happen’**

**‘Provide family mediation’**

**‘Always keep the young person aware of their pathway and situation - keep them informed’**

**‘Promote where young people can go for help’**

### The Service

Early intervention work is targeted to keep young people at high risk of homelessness stay in the family home/ network where safe to do so. The focus is on planning and preparing with young people at high risk of homelessness and their parents/family BEFORE they are in crisis - a critical element of the Positive Pathway.

Childhood experiences/issues which can indicate a high risk of early homelessness and future homelessness and multiple exclusion<sup>37 38</sup> – and which a range of agencies are usually aware of before the age of 16 - include:

- Not attending school/excluded from school
- Involvement in the criminal justice system
- Running away/going missing for one night or more
- Neglect
- Substance misuse - Tier 2 /3 /4
- Domestic abuse/violence in the family home
- Mental health issues in the family (parents and/ or young person)
- Older siblings previously presenting as homeless at a young age.

<sup>37</sup> As outlined in Suzanne Fitzpatrick and N Pleace et al, Statutory Homelessness in England: The experience of families and 16-17 year olds, DCLG, 2008 and in G.Bramley and S.Fitzpatrick et al. 'Hard Edges – Mapping Severe and Multiple Disadvantage in England' published by Lankelly Chase Foundation 2015

<sup>38</sup> Pathways into multiple exclusion homelessness in seven UK cities, Fitzpatrick et al 2013 [https://pureapps2.hw.ac.uk/portal/files/7456915/US\\_Pathways.pdf](https://pureapps2.hw.ac.uk/portal/files/7456915/US_Pathways.pdf)

## Considerations and tips

Many young people report that they do not know where to go to get help. Research has shown that around 80% of young people<sup>39</sup> try other options first before coming to a local authority. By this time, opportunities to prevent homelessness may have reduced.

In most authorities the majority of young people presenting to the local authority as homeless are already known to and getting support from other, often statutory services. The following services – and others – will be working with young people at high risk of homelessness:

- Schools and academies
- Pupil Referral Units
- Troubled Families programme
- Early help and targeted children's and families services
- Youth Offending Service
- CAMHS
- Children's Services – teenagers in care, on the edge of care, subject to child protection plans and child in need plans
- FE Colleges
- Voluntary agencies

Awareness of professionals regarding the difficulties of leaving home at a young age is often limited. There may be some instances where leaving home and presenting as homeless/going into supported accommodation is too easily resorted to – perhaps as a short term 'solution' to family difficulties. The challenge is to establish systems whereby the full range of local services are able to systematically identify young people who are at high risk of homelessness and take action to prevent a homelessness crisis, sustaining young people within their family networks and where necessary working in partnership to facilitate planned moves.

Early Help and support to stay at home

- There are already Early Help and preventative intervention programmes running in all local authorities for young people at risk and their parents, commissioned by Children's Social Services, Education, Health and Youth Offending Services.

- Local Safeguarding Boards will set out the Early Help offer for teenagers and promotion of this to ensure professionals are aware of what is available. Within this, it could be worth checking out if there is some guidance for professionals regarding identifying the issues/risks that may lead to youth homelessness, where to go for help and the realities of leaving home at a young age.
- The Troubled Families programme and the national Positive Pathway model are both premised on joint working, practical support, prevention and a whole-systems approach which focuses on improved outcomes. The criteria for the Troubled Family Programme and some of the causal factors which can lead to youth homelessness are the same (e.g. anti-social behaviour, not going to school/excluded). Locally there could be an opportunity to align around Phase 2 of the Troubled Families programme.
- Consider how to avoid the 'cliff edge' of services that support young people to stay at home/within the family network dropping away at the age of 16 or 17. For Children's Services there is a strong spend to save argument for continuing to work with young people up to age of 18 and their families, given the costs further down the line of meeting statutory duties to homeless 16/17 year olds<sup>40</sup>.
- Continuity of support, which is flexible enough to go beyond traditional service boundaries and follows young people beyond the age of 18, can help to prevent homelessness. Children's Social Services support is likely to drop away at the age of 18, but other support could continue or be picked up – dependent on how integrated your local service delivery is. The kind of support that might be offered could be, for example, on-going work with a Targeted /Integrated Youth Support Worker, a voluntary agency offering parenting support, family mediation or family group conferencing.

<sup>39</sup> Suzanne Fitzpatrick and N Pleace et al, Statutory Homelessness in England: The experience of families and 16-17 year olds, DCLG, 2008 and also see Centrepoin's 2015 report, 'Out of Reach: Young People's Experience of Rough Sleeping and Sofa Surfing'.

<sup>40</sup> House of Lords - G v Southwark judgment 2009 and DCLG and DCSF statutory guidance " Provision of Accommodation for 16 and 17 year old young people who may be homeless and/or require accommodation"

#### Planning with families to prevent crisis

- There are some young people in every local area who, for a variety of reasons, are not able to stay at home and need to leave the parental home. Despite all the best efforts of, for example, supportive family members and professionals, staying at home is not safe or is not going to be tenable in the long term.
- Where young people are likely to need to move, pro-active planning with the young person and their family could be considered. This is not about encouraging young people to move out when they don't need to, or about giving up on young people and families, but making contingency plans with them, based on the professional judgment within local authorities and with their partners.
- It is also an opportunity to do more reality checking with the whole family about what options there are and how difficult leaving home at a young age is. Family group conferencing could be a useful tool at this point to ensure the family is closely involved in all the planning – and ideally the family leads or co-leads the planning.
- Consider developing options to delay young people moving out in crisis where safeguarding is not an issue. There are some examples of schemes that might usefully be considered which incentivise staying at home and then if needed, planning a move. Some of these could be adapted for your local context.

There are only a few examples in England of this approach currently and this is a real area of missed opportunity. However, one pilot has shown that early identification and support leads to a reduction in leaving home and planning moves rather than homelessness.<sup>41</sup>

### **EXAMPLE - Norfolk - identifying young people at high risk before they are in the crisis of homelessness**

Set up as part of the Family Intervention Programme (FIP), **Norfolk County Council with District Housing Authorities** decided to identify young people at high risk of homelessness, and work intensively with young people, (including under 16 year olds) and their families. Norfolk County Council led on identifying young people. Where young people could not stay within the parental home, there was a focus on planning moves. It was a small pilot, with Rural Stonham FIP and Norwich City Council FIP taking part. An evaluation<sup>42</sup> has shown some interesting and encouraging results. As well as good prevention outcomes, where young people could not ultimately remain in the parental home the involvement of the support workers meant moves were planned, and homelessness – and all that goes with it – was avoided. Note that this was a short term pilot, funded with DCLG money, and it has not been extended.

<sup>41</sup> Report from Norfolk County Council December 2012: "Family Intervention Project/Restorative Approaches: A Project aimed at improving family relationship to prevent youth homelessness"

<sup>42</sup> Norfolk FIP Mediation/Restorative Approaches A project aimed at improving family relationships to prevent youth homelessness, final report December 2012, Rebecca White

## 10.3 Integrated response for young people who need help with housing and Gateway to commissioned accommodation and support

### 3 Integrated response ('hub' or 'virtual hub') and gateway to commissioned accommodation and support

**The Service:** Led by the Housing Authority and Children's Services, an integrated service for young people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or need help with planned transitions to independence. Housing options and homelessness prevention services come together, often co-located, with other services including support for pathways into learning and work. Underpinned by assessment and including a needs driven gateway into commissioned supported accommodation and flexible housing related support services. Key data collection point to inform ongoing development of the pathway.

#### Desired results:

- Homelessness is prevented wherever possible, for example by supporting young people to stay in their family network or preventing the loss of a tenancy.
- Young people who need accommodation and/or support get it, including quick access emergency accommodation and immediate and ongoing support where needed.
- Young peoples' accommodation and support underpins rather than disrupts their pathways in learning and work.

### What young people said:

**'Offer a space young people would feel comfortable going to, that is central and easy to find'**

**'Advertising so young people know where to go'**

**'Repeating information about ourselves several times is unnecessary and stressful'**

### The Service

A local authority has a seamless, joined up approach to pro-actively preventing young people becoming homeless when they approach for help with housing. Ideally there is a single, integrated "front door" with Children's Services and Housing working together, often with a voluntary sector partner. Where this is not possible, sometimes due to the rural nature of a local area, there is a 'virtual' single entry to services, with Housing, Children's Services and other agencies all working together to resolve housing need, homelessness and the surrounding issues.

The service functions include assessment of need, planning, advice, housing options and prevention activity. Short stay/emergency accommodation is available if needed and there is signposting or access to other services – e.g. advice/support on education, training and employment, health services, life skills and any benefit entitlements.

The 'gateway' into supported accommodation for young people is also provided through or closely aligned to this function – in effect this is the day to day access into all housing related support commissioned provision for young people, not only the 'immediate access' provision.

Housing related functions within a single integrated service gateway are described below.

#### Advice on housing options

Housing advice and options involves giving a realistic picture of what sorts of accommodation might be available and the pros and cons of each - for example affordability, the likelihood of availability, waiting times, locations, and expectations of landlords. All options should be explored including staying with family and friends and sharing with others. The concept of progression – working towards living independently - is also part of the options advice.

There could be access to the local social lettings agency or private rented access scheme and some linkage with the Housing Register. For young people, the ability to manage a tenancy on a low income is a key factor which will sharpen for many once planned changes to Housing Benefit are implemented in April 2017. Affordability is already a major consideration for any new young tenant and landlord relationship.

## **Assessment and planning of housing and other support needs**

Many young people have a range of other needs, which will not necessarily be obvious unless a thorough assessment takes place. This goes beyond looking at housing/ accommodation and into other dimensions of young people's lives, such as family, relationships, identity, health, education/training/employment, self-care and practical living skills.

Assessment of needs is often not a one-off activity but on-going, informing planning the best options for young people and the services they may need to support them. The starting point is a low level assessment of their current situation and immediate needs. From this point decisions will be taken with them about the most appropriate way forward and whether a more detailed or statutory assessment is needed.

If there is reason to believe a young person is homeless, or at risk of homelessness within 28 days, a homelessness investigation will be triggered. For 16/17 year olds, if they are actually or imminently homeless, Children's Services will undertake a Section 17 child in need or 'single' assessment. Ideally this will be done jointly with Housing.

Where a young person is likely to need short stay or supported accommodation, a risk assessment will be needed, and dependent on local working arrangements with supported accommodation providers this may be undertaken through the integrated service gateway.

### **Prevention of homelessness**

There are a range of prevention tools which can be used to reduce homelessness. An unpinning approach or ethos which works well is to slow things down at the point when a young person presents as being homeless. This does not mean that the young person's needs are ignored, or the young person feels "fobbed off", but that there is not an immediate assumption that the young person is homeless and has no other solution than emergency accommodation. Individual situations and needs have to be assessed and prevention tools used where appropriate, based on professional judgment.

Examples of these tools are: home visits quickly - within 48 hours; informal negotiation and mediation between family members; more formal family mediation or family group conferencing; debt and benefits advice work; use of short term prevention funds (e.g. through use of Children's Services Section 17 budget and homelessness prevention funds) or Discretionary Housing Payments; stays with extended family members/friends; actively assisting the young person into college or training; floating support; assigning the young person a youth support worker; or planning a move for the whole family

(e.g. where overcrowding is an issue).

The combining of Children's Services and Housing expertise is essential at this point to ensure the chance of prevention amongst 16/17 year olds, young offenders, care leavers and other young people is optimised.

Home visiting, combined with the use of informal negotiation and mediation skills is highly effective when used consistently. Offering ongoing support – and continuing to engage with the young person and their family after the immediate crisis/flashpoint has passed, is essential to sustaining the prevention.

But there are some young people who cannot and should not remain at home due to risk of significant harm. Assessment and professional judgment will determine which young people are at risk and do need to leave home.

### **Young people in and leaving care**

It is sometimes the case that placements begin to "break down" for 16/17 year olds who are in care (i.e. foster care or residential care), or if they have already left care but are still staying with ex-foster carers, things can start to get difficult. The prevention approach can be utilised for these young people as well – not all of the prevention tools outlined above apply, but many can still be used to try to support young people and their carers, to either stay in their accommodation or to plan a move if they are not able to stay in the longer term. Barnardo's and St Basils will launch a 'Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Framework' in September 2015, see Barnardo's and St Basils websites for this new resource.

### **Young people in custody**

It is estimated that around 50% of young people aged 16-24 who leave custody have housing needs and are at high risk of homelessness at the point of release. A joint approach can reduce risks of homelessness for this group. All 16/17 year olds will be looked after whilst on remand and some will have leaving care status. Planning is needed to prevent homelessness for these young people, regardless of whether they are looked after children, care leavers or not, as without suitable and safe accommodation there is a far higher risk of re-offending and exposure to significant risks. Again, a range of the prevention tools mentioned can be utilised with good effect, but a joint approach is needed with Youth Offending Services, Community Rehabilitation Companies and the Probation Service.



## EXAMPLE - Royal Borough of Greenwich

The Royal Borough of Greenwich provides a range of services to all young people in the borough via a one-stop-shop, The Point. A young people's housing options and homelessness prevention service called 1st Base is located at The Point and has staff within it from Housing and Children's Services. There is a joint protocol between 1st Base and the Youth Offending Service which sets out how the services will work with young people at different stages of their custodial or community-based sentence and also around the transition to 18. The protocol sets out clearly the different responsibilities of agencies involved. The success of this joint working has been recognised by the Youth Justice Board: <https://www.justice.gov.uk/youth-justice/effective-practice-library/first-base>

### A single "gateway" into emergency accommodation and supported accommodation

In some of the most integrated services, there is a single access point or "gateway" in to all supported accommodation in the local area, including emergency accommodation or short stay accommodation. No young person can therefore go into supported accommodation unless they have been through an assessment and prevention of homelessness options have been explored. A gateway enables:

- A more consistent approach to needs assessment and understanding of available provision, leading to better opportunities to match young people with accommodation options taking into account their needs, support networks, preferences and the risks they may face and present.
- Better use of very limited resources, ensuring that those with the highest needs are accessing the services they need
- Improved safeguarding, with a shared knowledge of possible risk, agreed approaches to manage risks and knowledge of who is placed where
- Ability to prevent evictions of young people through joint approaches to their support and through collaboration between providers to enable 'managed moves' where tenancies are at risk
- Improved ability to continue with prevention work, so young people can be supported to return home/ to family/friends if this is safe and appropriate
- Improved ability to plan moves with young people and their families
- An overview of planned and unplanned move on
- Prompt and appropriate filling of voids.

Ultimately a "gateway", as opposed to young people self-referring into supported accommodation, ensures that priority is given to those who most need supported accommodation and that all other prevention options

have been exhausted prior to a referral being made to a supported accommodation provider.

### Immediate access and short stay accommodation

If a young person is homeless and there is no possibility of a return to the family or stay with friends then accommodation is likely to be needed, even if it's just for a short period of time. There are different models of suitable short stay accommodation including:

- Nightstop services, where a young person is placed with a trained and vetted "host" in their own home for a few nights
- Short term supported lodgings where young people can stay with a host household for a few weeks or more
- "Crash pad" beds in larger supported housing schemes/foyers, ring fenced for young people in crisis.
- Assessment centres, where young people can stay for 6 – 12 weeks
- Self-contained units of temporary accommodation run by a local authority
- 'Time out' schemes where respite accommodation is available alongside an opportunity to utilise family mediation.

A stay in this type of accommodation is a chance to continue to try to prevent homelessness and enable a young person to return to the family /extended family where it is safe to do so. It should be a time of purposeful assessment, planning and, where safe, regular family contact, led by a skilled professional. Actively supporting young people to continue with or start again at school, college or training is part of the work.



## Considerations and tips

- Young people usually contact local authorities only when they are at high risk of homelessness. There is a challenge to look at service redesign at other points in the Positive Pathway regarding culture and systems change which encourage and enable young people and/or their families to seek advice on housing issues from **before** the crisis of homelessness. This links to the Universal Offer and the Early Help elements of the Positive Pathway (see above).
- A local single “front door” into services for housing options advice and working with young people who are in housing need or at risk of homelessness ensures a more consistent approach and high rates of prevention.
- Making the business case for a more integrated way of working – starting with understanding of the client groups and evidence that local authorities that have the best prevention rates amongst young people are the ones where there is an integrated approach. There are helpful resources available to assist in redesigning public services<sup>43</sup> so there is much closer alignment with other agencies/services whose primary objectives are to improve outcomes for vulnerable young people. Every local area is different but the sorts of services which might be located within or linked closely with an integrated service model include:
  - Careers advice/Connexions
  - DWP /Job Centre Plus services
  - Benefits advice /income maximisation and debt counselling
  - Integrated Youth Support Services
  - Youth Offending Services
  - Leaving care services
  - Substance misuse services
  - Mental health services
  - Sexual health advice
  - Life skills training
- It is not always possible to develop these types of models for a range of reasons – e.g. size of area, numbers/demand, geography, location/buildings, priorities of other partners and of course budget. But there are compelling ‘cost benefit’ reasons to consider this option, even on a ‘virtual’ basis, which a cost benefit analysis could evidence.
- Data collection is a key part of any service re-design – it enables a local authority to understand needs, trends and prevention outcomes at this point of the Pathway.
- However, the foundation for a single integrated service gateway is Children’s Services and Housing Authorities working together. There is evidence that a voluntary sector input is also highly effective at this point in the pathway.

## EXAMPLE

**Birmingham’s Youth Hub** is a multi-agency service, delivered in partnership between Birmingham City Council’s Homeless and Children’s Services and St Basils. The Youth Hub works with all young people in housing need, including care leavers, young people leaving custody and young parents. It offers specialist services to prevent youth homelessness, including housing options, advice and family mediation. Safeguarding of young people underpins all of the work of the partners in the Youth Hub. Trained staff undertake needs and risk assessments, referring young people into specialist services where necessary.

The Youth Hub offers a variety of different services including:

- Assistance in preventing homelessness - family mediation; access to floating support and landlord liaison/negotiation
- Statutory assessments including Children’s Services undertaking Initial Assessments of young people aged 16/17, and Housing taking and investigating homeless applications and provision of temporary accommodation
- Advice and help applying for a range of housing options, for example, supported accommodation, private and social housing
- Benefits advice
- Advice on accessing education, training and employment
- Specialist support services including health needs, drugs and alcohol misuse support and mental health services
- Access into suitable short stay/emergency accommodation if needed

Via a central telephone line, Youthline, it is the “gateway” into supported accommodation for all young people in housing need in Birmingham.

<sup>43</sup> See <http://publicservicetransformation.org> for examples of cost benefit analysis work and service re-design ideas

## EXAMPLE

### North Yorkshire County Council

In a large rural two tier authority it is often more challenging to deliver in an integrated service but several local authorities are doing this successfully. In North Yorkshire the 7 District authorities have a joint approach with the county's Children's and Young Peoples Service. There is a clear pathway for young people aged 16 – 25, focusing on prevention in the first instance. Each of the Districts has a 'hub' comprising three partners; the district Housing Department, Children and Young Peoples Service and a third provider organisation. The model has a high rate of prevention success – consistently over 80%.

## EXAMPLE

**1st Base in Greenwich** provides housing options and support service for 16-17 year olds and care leavers 18-20 at risk of homelessness, as part of integrated youth services at a more generic youth provision, The Point.

**1st Base@The Point** prevents homelessness, assists young people to remain or return home where it is safe to do so, and provides holistic assessments and integrated services to meet needs.

The Point is a fully integrated one stop service led by Children's Services, in partnership with housing, health, and third sector providers. The service was established to provide targeted youth support to the most vulnerable young people, with particular focus on improving health and well-being, access to education employment and training, personal and community safety. Delivering key services within a young person friendly and welcoming environment, The Point succeeds in attracting young people who are otherwise disengaged from services, to attend for EET activities, sexual health screening, substance misuse services as well as 1st Base housing options and support. 1st Base is a team consisting of a Housing Options and Support Officer and a social worker, responsible for completing housing options, homelessness and Child in Need assessments, and working with young people and families to find solutions that prevent homelessness. 1st Base carry out home visits, work with those in custody, offer floating support to young people and families in their homes, arrange respite accommodation and mediation services, and act as the gateway to all young people's supported housing in the borough. Housing support officers work with young people 16-24 to develop independent living skills and to sustain accommodation, including young people in social housing who are at risk of homelessness and those 18+ who are not in priority need but need support to access and manage in the private sector.

## EXAMPLE

### Somerset County Council

Pathways to Independence (P2i) was established in May 2013, following a comprehensive commissioning process which aimed to implement the requirements of the Somerset Youth Housing Strategy 2012 – 2015. P2i is multi-agency homelessness prevention and housing related support services for young people aged 16-25 who reside in, or have a local connection with Somerset. Part of this provision is an access point for services in each of the 5 District authority areas. The way in which the provision is delivered varies, reflecting local differences. Although official statistics for the number of young people entering the care system and the number of young people accepted as homeless by the District Councils cannot be directly attributed to the work of P2i, there has been a dramatic decline in these numbers.

## 10.4 Commissioned Accommodation and Support

### 4 Commissioned accommodation and support

**The service:** A range of accommodation and support options designed for younger and more vulnerable young people. Accommodation and support is linked together in some options, for example supported accommodation, Foyers, supported lodgings and Housing First. Flexible outreach support is also available to support young people wherever they live (including in the family home) and stick with them when they move if needed.

**Desired results:** Young people gain the stability and skills they need, engage with learning and work and move on to greater independence.

#### What young people said:

**“One size doesn’t fit all”**

**“Housing accommodation options should be able to change as the needs change”,**

**“Would like to have more support from health and mental health within housing accommodations”**

**“When I was misplaced it was very counter-productive”**

**“The people providing the services just want you to sign forms for money, I am disheartened. It is not about producing the service, it is about providing it”**

**‘Supported lodgings are good’**

**‘We need stability in support - e.g. one key worker’**

**‘Pre-tenancy training is really important’**

**‘Strategy is needed for the longer term, for less intensive support, as support may be most needed when ‘independence’ is reached’**

### The Service

This part of the pathway is where the biggest investment of public funds is usually made, hence the development of gateway systems in many localities to ensure the resources are allocated and managed in order to meet statutory duties and the needs of young people as effectively as possible. The range of commissioned services varies widely, depending on factors such as the funding available; local practice in commissioning and procurement; the level of collaboration between departments; local geographic factors (particularly urban and rural settings); and the other resources, particularly buildings designed or adaptable for the provision of supported accommodation, available locally.

A range of different options, organised into an accommodation and support pathway, is usually required to meet the needs of the range of young people in any local area at different stages in their journeys. Models within local pathways include:

- Building based supported accommodation services (including Foyers) with staff on site. They vary enormously in size, facilities and the level of support provided to young people. Higher support / 24 hour cover services often include an element of emergency/crash pad provision.
- Supported lodgings, where young people live in the homes of vetted and trained host households. Nightstop services provide emergency accommodation in volunteer’s homes and schemes

- often operate both models together
- Dispersed building based schemes where young people may live in self contained or small shared properties and receive floating or outreach support until they are ready to move on. A core and cluster approach is sometimes used so that support is easily accessible to young people.
- Floating or flexible support services which are not attached to a particular property and can support young people wherever they are living, including in the family home, and stick with them when their circumstances change.
- 'Housing First'<sup>44</sup> services for young people with complex needs and for whom communal living is not a suitable option. Young people are placed in settled accommodation without any expectation that they should be 'ready' for independent living, and supported intensively to build from the base of a secure place to live. This model has a strong evidence base for older people with multiple and complex needs and early research shows promising outcomes for some young people.

## EXAMPLE

### Get Real – Barnet Homes

Young people who become homeless in Barnet are being given additional support in return for their contribution to the community through an innovative new house-share scheme by social landlord Barnet Homes.

The Get Real project offers shared accommodation and ongoing support to young people who show a commitment to education, training or employment. The scheme is aimed at breaking the culture of antisocial behaviour, alcohol and drug abuse and welfare dependency that had previously existed in their temporary accommodation.

By offering a flat share rather than the social isolation of a temporary single-bed property, Barnet Homes aims to give young people who can no longer live with their family a better introduction to living independently. The scheme is also designed to give the young people the best possible chance of improving their own means, so that in future they may not need to rely on social housing or the benefits system. This will serve to ease pressures on social housing in Barnet, where demand for council and housing association properties far exceeds supply.

Progression is about planning moves based on individual needs and a readiness to succeed. Young people should be able to move between accommodation options, so if a move does not work out, they could, in theory, try another type of option. Progression through each option towards independence may be right for some, but for others, their route may be more directly into more independence, with their own front door and a small amount of support to settle in.

The critical point is that there are choices and young people are not 'stuck' in the system, in higher cost, high support provision when they are ready for moving on, because there is not enough housing supply to move them on to. The model allows for young people who need more support moving back into higher support provision, if it looks like they are at high risk of tenancy breakdown in their current accommodation.

A wide range of organisations provide these services, most commonly housing associations, charities and private sector providers. Commissioning and/or procurement is usually done by the local authority, sometimes in collaboration with other public sector agencies for specialist provision such as supported accommodation for young people with mental health needs. In many areas

there are two main LA commissioning and/or procurement routes for accommodation and support options for young people aged 16 and above:

- housing related support led by adult social care and/or strategic housing functions (usually an evolution from the old Supporting People programme)
- placements for young people who are looked after and leaving care led by Children's Services.

Several single tier and county areas have worked to bring these separate systems together in the interest of improving value for money and increasing quality and choice in provision. This can take the form of joint commissioning from separate pots or the pooling of budgets.

Procurement routes also vary between block contracts and spot purchase, both within and outside framework contracts, and prices vary widely and not necessarily in line with service levels or quality. More recently payment by results models have begun to be tested, for example through the Government's Fair Chance Fund for homeless 18 to 25 year olds who are not in learning or work and cannot be effectively supported through other routes. There are 7 schemes in operation between 2015 and 2017 inclusive, each backed by a Social Investment Bond,

<sup>44</sup> Housing first is premised on addressing homelessness through solving the housing need on an unconditional basis – provision of settled accommodation to those at risk of chronic long term homeless and then additional support services being available according to needs. See a useful piece on the model here:

<http://www.theguardian.com/cities/2014/oct/20/housing-first-the-counterintuitive-method-for-solving-urban-homelessness>, A 2015 evaluation of Housing First in England here: <http://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Housing%20First%20in%20England%20-%20full%20report.pdf> and a useful think piece on adapting the Housing First model for young people here: <http://www.feantsaresearch.org/IMG/pdf/think-piece-1-4.pdf>

and an external evaluation is underway.

Building based supported accommodation is increasingly in short supply and is relatively expensive because it comes with a package of support and relatively high housing management costs. These costs are generally met through a combination of LA funding and rents and service charges, the latter two primarily funded by housing benefit except for looked after young people. There are likely to be some changes in relation to housing benefit for supported accommodation (specified' and 'exempt' accommodation) in the future, following an ongoing review by the Department of Work and Pensions<sup>45</sup>.

Generally supported accommodation is most beneficial for those who are still relatively young and need time to learn life skills to cope with living independently (i.e. 16 - 20) and also for those with high /medium support needs. For 16/17 year olds in particular, there is a strong argument for most to remain in supported accommodation until they are well prepared and equipped to succeed.

Apart from having the life skills and maturity to succeed living independently, the legal age at which a tenancy can be granted is 18 . It is anecdotally reported that within the current benefits system high rents often associated with supported accommodation costs can be a significant barrier to young people entering low paid work.

There will be local arrangements about how long a young person can stay in this provision. Commissioners are generally seeking to reduce the lengths of stay in this provision, from what used to typically be a maximum of 2 years. Practice and research has shown that young people are particularly at risk of repeat homelessness, financial hardship and debt following resettlement – Research by Kings College London showed that young people were more than twice as likely as older groups to experience repeat homelessness and much more likely to accrue debt in the 5 years following resettlement from supported accommodation<sup>47</sup>. There is a real challenge for providers to ensure young people are ready to move on into other types of accommodation and sustain it.

## EXAMPLE

The Money House is delivered by The Hyde Group in partnership with the Royal Borough of Greenwich and others. It is a training course for young people at risk of homelessness designed to reduce that risk. It is based in a real flat in Greenwich and delivers a 5 day course to 16-25 yr olds leaving care or supported housing, in rent arrears or otherwise at high risk of homelessness. We focus on financial confidence, especially budgeting, borrowing safely and dealing with benefits and bureaucracy. They also teach cooking on a budget and the responsibilities of being a tenant. Young people who complete the course come away with an AQA qualification in Budgeting and Debt Management.

The project is fully integrated in to Royal Greenwich's homelessness services and attendance is linked to the housing allocations system so that young people seeking accommodation need to attend to be offered a property.

Results so far are very positive; an analysis of rent arrears of graduates 1 year on (<http://www.haikudeck.com/p/8ZfmwmVxWk>) showed they are 3 time less likely to be in arrears than young people who didn't attend.

Have a look at what young people say here  
<http://www.hyde-housing.co.uk/hydeplus/themoneyhouse>

<sup>45</sup> See <http://www.housing.org.uk/publications/browse/new-definition-for-specified-accommodation/>

<sup>46</sup> Generally, a tenancy is created in law automatically when a person is given the right to occupy accommodation with exclusive occupation for a period in return for rent. However, a 16/17 year old cannot hold a legal estate in land and this means they cannot hold a legal tenancy. The landlord may grant a legal tenancy to a trustee to hold on behalf of the 16/17 until he or she reaches 18.

<sup>47</sup> See *Rebuilding Lives* by Crane et al of Kings College London (2015) [http://centrepoin.org.uk/media/1450188/rebuilding\\_lives\\_report.pdf](http://centrepoin.org.uk/media/1450188/rebuilding_lives_report.pdf)

In supported accommodation, each young person should have their own named support worker and a support plan and be working to agreed goals around, for example, their life skills, education, training and employment, health, relationships and emotional well-being. Commissioners are increasingly looking for outcomes beyond housing related support and are focussing on success in education and training and provision of support around emotional well-being. This is where joint commissioning can make an impact on positive outcomes across a range of domains (see Appendix 2 for an example of an outcomes framework)

Young people advise that as a general rule, the floating support they receive is most effective when it's flexible and able to respond to changing circumstances, rather than be a relatively rigid block of agreed support hours per week.

## Considerations and tips

- A 'gateway' or single access point into all supported accommodation is very useful in order to provide:
- Better use of limited resources, ensuring those with the highest needs access the services they need
- Improved safeguarding, with a shared knowledge of potential risk, agreed approaches to managing risk and knowledge of who is placed where
- Prompt and appropriate filling of voids.
- Joint commissioning by a range of public sector commissioners enhances positive outcomes, beyond the traditional 'housing related support' function. Examples of joint commissioning around support to young people not able to live at home or in care include:
  - Children's Services for looked after 16 /17 year olds so they do not hit a 'cliff edge' at 18 and for suitable alternative to custodial remand options for young people aged 16/17
  - Health commissioners ( for example, mental health and substance misuse commissioners)
  - Adult Social Care, where young people meet the thresholds for services
  - Community Rehabilitation Companies and the National Probation Service, who need to ensure there is not only accommodation but appropriate support for young people coming out of custody, or as an alternative to custody. Many of these young people have multiple needs.
- To reduce duplication and improve joint working and data collection, a shared referral form and common risk assessment process between all housing related support providers could be useful. This could help to pick up any trends regarding the changes to the length of stay for young people, outcomes and any links to, for example, increased repeat presentations/homelessness.
- To avoid unplanned moves and evictions, several local authorities have developed with their providers a 'planned move' protocol, to ensure that any risks of eviction are minimised through pre-empting difficulties.
- Many local authorities have set up regular multi-agency 'panel' meetings to discuss young people coming in to and at risk of falling out of their local pathway. This usually includes care leavers at the point of leaving care and young offenders due to come out of custody, as well as other young people. It can also be used for agreeing who is ready for move on.
- Some Local Authorities have found 'Move-on panels' helpful to assess which young people are ready for move-on and identify the most suitable options. These could be linked to a local private rented access scheme and/or social lettings agency, so young people can access rent deposits or bonds.
- In order to prepare young people for sharing with others as their move on option, provider organisations could consider adjusting their pre-tenancy training. There is useful learning from the Crisis 'Sharing Solutions' evaluation and toolkit<sup>49</sup>,

<sup>48</sup> See "Psychologically Informed Services for Homeless People" February 2012, published by DCLG and University of Southampton

<sup>49</sup> see <http://www.crisis.org.uk/pages/sharing-solutions-programme.html>

## 10.5 A Range of Housing Options

### 5 Range of Housing Options

**The service:** A range of safe, decent, affordable housing options, shared and self-contained, in the private, social and third sectors. Where the market doesn't provide sufficiently for young people on low incomes the offer will need to be shaped through local housing strategies, using partnerships to create options. May include creative approaches such as partnerships with learning providers and employers to provide dedicated accommodation that underpins participation in learning and work. Access to flexible outreach support (4) in case young people need it.

**Desired results:** Young people are economically active and have suitable homes that they can afford - they can build for their future.

#### What young people said:

**“On-going checks and assistance with how we are doing with bill paying and healthy eating helps me gain independence and keeps me from re-entering the system”**

**“More partnership working with young people and private landlords - more tenancies available for young people”**

**“Floating support for 1 month, or flexible, don't fix a time”**

**“Advice line for us to call if we need it - and a fast track system if things go wrong”**

**“Train landlords about young people - to breakdown negativity and raise awareness”**

#### The Service

The underpinning feature of this section is of young people being in safe, decent and affordable accommodation. For most that means staying in the family home and delaying a move, but we are concerned here with young people that are unlikely to have that option.

As housing markets tighten and affordability grows as a challenge there is a need to think creatively and pro-actively about how to generate suitable, affordable housing options for young people starting out on low incomes. Owner occupation and shared ownership options are a long way off - if on the radar at all - for most young people, and renting in the private or social sector is the default option. Many local authorities and partnerships are working hard to find ways of making the rented market more accessible for young people, for example through:

- Pro-active support of schemes to increase the supply of shared private rented accommodation available to young people
- Introducing sharing options in social housing, using existing stock and/or leasing
- Promoting lodgings as an option.

An emerging approach is specially developed accommodation for young people in learning or work, often in partnership between landlords and learning providers and/or employers. The Government has recognised that this accommodation option is a gap and has developed the 'Platform for Life' programme<sup>50</sup>. Capital funding is being invested in local schemes to develop shared accommodation for young people in work, training or further education. Features of this type of provision could include:

- Affordability - the rents need to be low, pegged at the Local Housing Allowance level or a level truly affordable for young people. We would recommend

50 See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-change-and-platform-for-life-funds-2015-to-2017-prospectus>



- local analysis of young people's income levels.
  - Some enhanced housing management and "light touch" support possibly via a 'peer' or 'lead' tenant, or a college or training provider.
  - Strong links with FE colleges, training providers and Job Centre Plus. Referral routes could be linked exclusively to these partnerships.
  - Investment in the social fabric of the scheme, for example mentors and positive role models or "lead tenants" living in the accommodation who have been there for a year or two, a social area, a residents committee with a small budget.
  - An ethos of study, work and aspiration, perhaps supported by evening classes and access to a range of learning and development opportunities on the premises.
  - IT facilities
  - Help to find and move on to settled accommodation
- Locally different types of accommodation could be available, dependent on supply and availability, including clusters of small shared units, larger blocks of accommodation or shared houses.

## EXAMPLE The 'Live and Work' Scheme

St Basils and Sandwell & West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust have developed a ground breaking new scheme to offer homeless young people both paid apprenticeships and nearby accommodation, making good use of formerly empty ex-nurses lodgings which have been renovated.

This innovative new scheme was funded through a grant from the Government's Empty Homes Community Grant Programme (EHCGP) to renovate empty properties on the hospital site. 27 young people will initially benefit from the scheme but it is hoped the partnership will continue and through the learning from this first scheme, be replicated elsewhere. Young people will live benefit free as the rents have been deflated to an affordable level for young apprentices.

See <http://www.stbasils.org.uk/news-resources/news/partners-hold-open-day-for-new-sandwell-live-and-work-scheme/Live and Work>

## EXAMPLE

New Charter Housing Association's Two's Company Scheme:

The Scheme facilitates sharing in 2 bed social housing, aimed at people who are already friends or relatives but not co-habiting. The purpose is to address affordability. Sharers are let 2 bed properties and are granted Joint Assured Shorthold tenancies. If one person moves out, the other will need to meet the shortfall in the rent until a new lodger is found.

## EXAMPLE Snugbug HouseShare - young people sharing social housing

SnugBug Houseshare is run by St Vincent's Housing Association in Manchester. It is open to any young person aged 18-25 who has a local connection, access to public funding if needed and is able to live independently.

The model is shared social housing. The Scheme does not provide support to young people – if young people need support they need to bring it with them, e.g. floating support or a Personal Adviser. SnugBug Houseshare offers decent shared housing on six-month assured shorthold tenancies, with all young people needing to fill in an application form, attend a pre-tenancy course and then have an interview prior to being accepted. The scheme is run using 'intensive housing management', which means the rent is slightly higher than the usual Local Housing Allowance rate because it covers things like a 24-hour call-out 'ranger' service and a weekly health and safety check. This Scheme has over 18 properties in a range of areas and houses 60 young people at any time.

## EXAMPLE

Westminster City Council's Fair Share Scheme

Westminster probably has the most pressurised housing market in the UK. Westminster's Fair Share housing scheme provides sub-market rented accommodation in housing association properties on a shared basis, with rents at a third cheaper than private sector rents. It is aimed at people who work and need to live in Westminster or very central London, such as market traders, performing artists and hospitality workers. The tenants are granted 12 month assured shorthold tenancies which can be renewed. A sharer can move out, with either a friend or a new tenant moving in – just like the private sector.



There are many journeys and routes into more independent accommodation. Most young people move on independently, with the support of their family, without ever needing housing advice/options services or living in supported accommodation. But some young people who ask for help from a Housing Options Service could be assisted to access accommodation – the type of available accommodation will vary depending on local circumstances and supply. Other young people who are living in specialist supported accommodation or ‘progression’ accommodation will see this as their final ‘move on’ option and may have worked towards ‘move-on’ for months or years.

The overriding linked issues for all young people are that of local supply and of affordability – can a young person find decent, safe accommodation and can they manage their financial commitments in the long-term in their accommodation?

Where young people live, access to public transport and what sort of local amenities are available (e.g. public transport, shopping, primary health services), proximity to support networks are important factors, as these will impact on any assessment of the ability to be economically active and affordability overall.

## Considerations and tips

- Many landlords (social and private) are concerned about young people's ability to afford accommodation. Affordability checks on prospective tenants are routinely undertaken and some young people are not being offered tenancies due to their low incomes and ability to manage payment of rent. High quality pre-tenancy training on financial management will assist young people as future tenants and could be accredited. Many providers of supported accommodation have programmes but these can be optional. See the Money House example above.
- It is reported that there is limited understanding amongst some professionals regarding options beyond a tenancy in social housing, which in turn creates an expectation amongst young people that social housing is the only or best option. This means discussion of other options including the option of sharing of accommodation is not happening routinely in many areas, and issues of affordability in the private rented sector may not be part of any preparation work.
- Settled accommodation implies independence and the ability to manage with no or very minimal support. A short period of floating support is often needed for some young people to help them settle in, and ideally for continuity, their key worker from the previous accommodation provides this.
- It is recognised that some young people, for example, those who are disabled or have enduring mental health problems, will always need support, but moving into their own settled accommodation, even with a higher level of floating support, is the ambition for the vast majority of young people.
- Sharing in social housing could be developed by housing associations and the local authority as an option for some young people. It can help to address affordability and better use of stock. Some examples of sharing accommodation for the longer term are outlined above as examples.
- Young people will need to buy furniture and white goods in order to settle in to a new home. Sources of funding for these are limited and unless providers assist young people in saving up and accessing local furniture schemes, charitable grants, the local welfare provision held by the local authority etc the experience of setting up a home is likely to be very difficult. Lack of basic furnishings and household equipment can make tenancy failure more likely.

- Crisis has a range of resources to support access to the private rented sector:

The Crisis 'Sharing Solutions' programme published an evaluation and toolkit in March 2015. This is based on 6 private rented sector sharing schemes piloted in 2014/15. Both publications provide invaluable insights into what makes sharing work – or not. Models of sharing include peer tenants/lead tenants and lodgings. They can be accessed here: <http://www.crisis.org.uk/pages/sharing-solutions-good-practice.html>

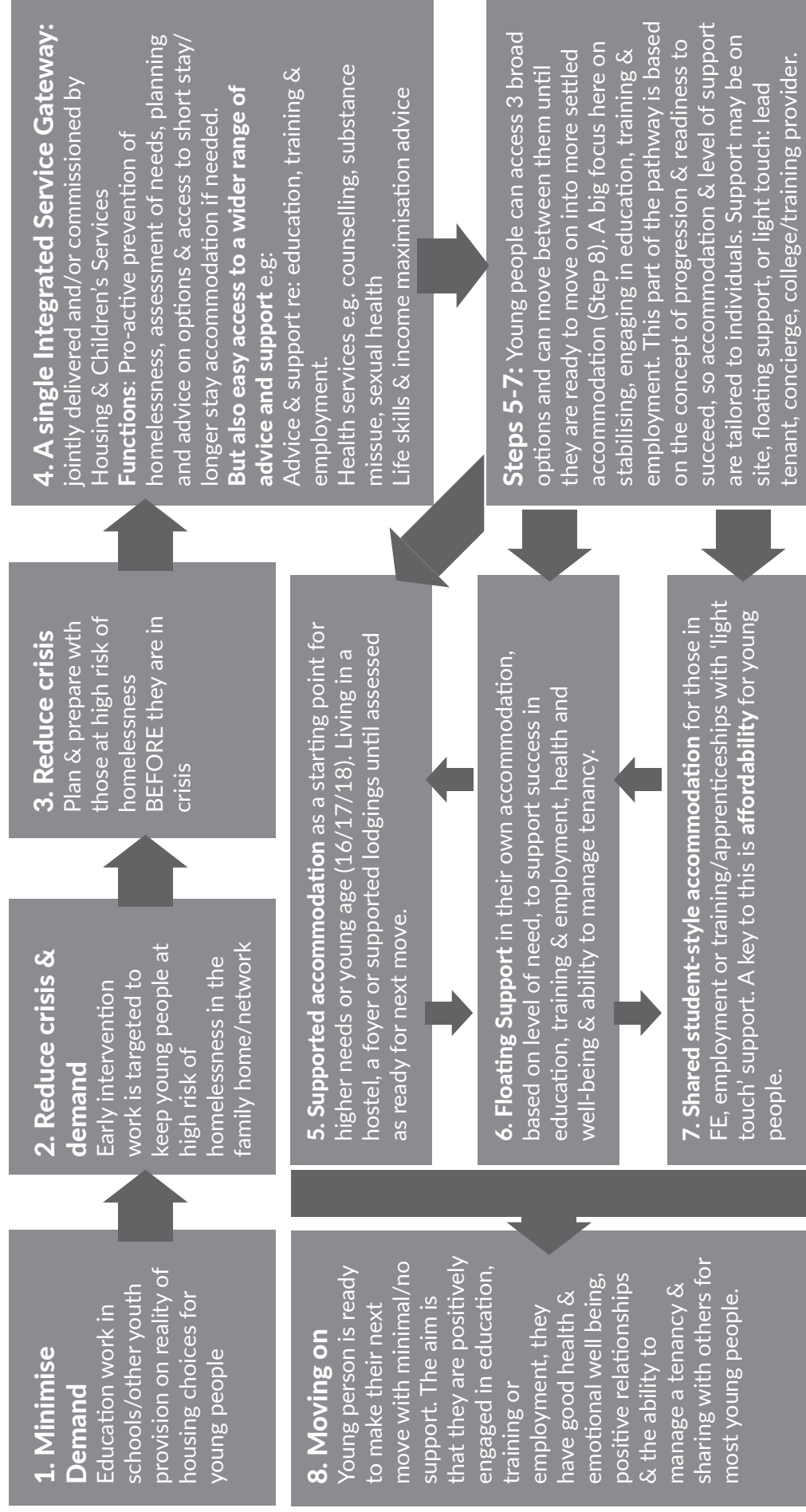
Given the difficulty for young people under 25 on low incomes accessing the private rented sector, there could be a more specialist offer to private landlords to take young people which provides additional landlord incentives in relation to young people as tenants. The 2012 Crisis toolkit on opening up the PRS to young people under 25 is the most informative resource available. See: <http://www.crisis.org.uk/data/files/publications/PRS%20Youth%20Homelessness%20Toolkit.pdf>

Crisis has also developed a free toolkit for how to deliver an information session for staff supporting clients to move on into private rented sector accommodation. It includes useful templates ranging from agendas, presentations, feedback forms and a myth-busting quiz, plus provides a useful overview on the private rented sector. This toolkit can be used by anyone looking to organise and deliver an information session to support staff who want to improve their knowledge about and confidence in the private rented sector. Move on to Private Renting' – A guide to training support staff

## Appendix One - Current Pathway 2012

The Positive Pathway aims to support the following outcomes for young people: achieving in education; career success; being healthy positive relationships, and involvement in meaningful, enjoyable activities.

Steps 1-4: An integrated focus on PREVENTION. Young people staying within the family network for as long as its safe and possible to do so.



## Appendix Two

### Example of an outcome framework for a local Positive Pathway

NB we are aware this may not fit with your local structures and performance management processes. It is for information only where local authorities wish to consider a wider set of outcomes for this group.

#### **The overall impact: Young people in your area are in education, training or are economically active**

The rationale:

Poverty is a key determinant: it increases the risk of poor outcomes across all other areas of young people's lives: health, education, community safety, and housing.

Economic activity must be our over-arching desired impact for young people and for the local area– it can help to break the cycle of deprivation. This will increase the possibility of positive outcomes.

### **As many young people as possible live at home or with their carers until they are ready to leave in a planned way**

#### **Descriptor of activity along the Positive Pathway:**

Young people are planning their further education, training and employment routes and alongside this understand their future housing options because...

- They are getting relevant, easy to understand information about their housing choices and the financial considerations of these from a range of sources
- They know where to go for more in-depth advice and help
- Parents and professionals who work with young people understand housing options and the real

challenges of leaving home at a young age and can advise young people

- Families where teenagers are at high risk of homelessness have access within their local area to support through the Troubled Families programme, family mediation and practical advice and help
- The 'single front door'/one stop shop/youth hub has access to a range of prevention tools including signposting young people at high risk of leaving home in an unplanned way to community based support (e.g. Troubled Families programme), family mediation, money advice, youth support etc.

#### **Suggested measures to choose from:**

✓ Young people report a good understanding of housing options and affordability issues ( NB this is qualitative and would need to be done via snapshot surveys or monitoring through feedback)

✓ Reduction in the number of young people presenting as homeless today (collected from your 'single front door', one stop shop/youth hub)

✓ Reduction in number of homelessness applications and S17 assessments undertaken (Housing Authorities and Children's Services)

✓ Planned moves from family home or care increase (a baseline would be needed and agreement about how to collect as it would involve other 'early help services, not only 'single front door', one stop shop/youth hub)

✓ Young people are prevented from homelessness and do not re-present to the single front door', one stop shop/youth hub within 6 months

## Young people have good physical and emotional well-being

### Descriptor of activity along the Positive Pathway:

Young people who leave home or care at a young age have good physical and emotional well-being because...

- They understand their individual health needs and how to seek advice or help when needed
- They are able to undertake activities which promote good physical health – physical exercise, healthy eating
- They can see /experience their lives moving forward positively, which helps promote their emotional well being
- They have social networks which support their emotional well being
- When they need someone – a trusted adult - to talk to, they know who they can contact

### Some suggested measures to choose from

Some suggestions for young people living in supported accommodation or receiving floating support:

- ✓ Registered with GP and dental service (housing related support contracted providers links to leaving care service and Youth Offending Service)
- ✓ Improved physical health (Housing related support commissioners, Public Health and providers could be self-reported through a snapshot questionnaire e.g. a strengths and difficulties questionnaire)
- ✓ Improved emotional health and well-being (CAMHS, Mental Health Trust, housing related support commissioners, Public Health and providers, could be self-reported through a snapshot questionnaire e.g. a strengths and difficulties questionnaire)
- ✓ Reduced levels of substance misuse – or increased access to substance misuse services (Providers and specialist substance misuse services for young people)
- ✓ Increased access to sexual health services OR reduction in levels of sexually transmitted infections e.g. chlamydia - (your local sexual health services)

## Young people feel safe and contribute positively within their local community

### Descriptor of activity along the Positive Pathway:

Young people who leave home or care at a young age feel safe and contribute to others feeling safe because...

- Their individual levels of vulnerability and risk are well understood by those professionals with whom they work
- There are systems in place to ensure there is a multi-agency response to those at high risk of significant harm, including young people aged 18 and over
- Young people have been supported to understand how to make safe choices in all areas of their lives - including through social networking, targeting by gangs, bullying and sexual exploitation - and know where to go for help and advice
- If a young person is at risk of offending/re-offending or anti-social behaviour, a multi-agency response and support to prevent and divert them is available

### Measures

Some suggestions for young people living in supported accommodation or in their own accommodation aged under 25:

- ✓ Reduction in first time entrants to the youth justice system, re-offending and youth custody rates ( YOS, Probation and CRC)
- ✓ Reduction in number of young people who are victims of crime including sexual exploitation (Local Safeguarding Board, Police and Children's Services)
- ✓ Young people report feeling safe (Housing related support commissioners providers)

(self-reported through a snapshot ,e.g. use of a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire)

## Young people feel safe and contribute positively within their local community

### Descriptor of activity along the Positive Pathway:

Young people live in decent, safe accommodation which they can afford on their income because.....

- They have planned for their moves based on accurate and realistic information and knowledge
- They have had some choice about where they live and the type of tenure
- They have undertaken independent living skills training including budgeting
- They have been assessed as able to afford and manage their tenancy/accommodation
- If they are sharing accommodation with others, including returning to family, they have the skills to share successfully and know how to get help if needed
- They have been encouraged to save prior to moving in
- If needed they can access funds, or affordable loans via a Credit Union, or in kind help, to set up their new home
- There is resettlement support and floating support if needed
- They know where to go for help at an early point if things start to go wrong

## Measures

Some suggestions for young people living in supported accommodation or in their own accommodation aged under 25:

- ✓ Reduction in social landlord tenancy failure rates amongst under 25s in bedsits and one bed accommodation (Housing Authority with other local Registered Providers)
- ✓ Reduction in Private Rented Sector tenancy failure where this is the housing option/move on option (Housing Authority)

✓ Reduction in repeat presentations to the single front door', one stop shop/youth hub of young people after 6 months, 12 months and 18 months for young people who have had their own tenancy? (single front door', one stop shop/youth hub)

✓ Young people are satisfied with their housing outcome – (Access to decent housing and some choice - measured by snapshot survey/focus group) Who would take responsibility for this?)

## Young people are engaged in education, training or are economically active

### Descriptor of activity along the Positive Pathway:

Young people who have to leave home or care at a young age are confident and motivated to achieve their career aspirations because....

- They understand their strengths, challenges and the pathway to success they want to pursue
- They have advice and support to assist them to make decisions
- They have basic skills – literacy and numeracy?
- They have good social and job skills – communication, time keeping, reliability
- They know where they can get help if they have a set back

## Measures

Some suggestions for young people living in supported accommodation or receiving floating support whilst with parents/family home or living more independently:

✓ Engaged in education or training aged 16 – 19 (housing related support commissioners with providers – needs to link to other local authority services e.g. Children's Services and Economic Development Services data collection) NB links to new school leaving age

✓ Engaged in employment, further education or training aged 19, 20 and 21 (housing related support commissioners with providers – needs to link to other local authority services e.g. Children's Services and Economic Development Services data collection)

# Developing **Positive** **Pathways** to Adulthood:



Please contact  
**Anna Whalen** ([anna.whalen@stbasils.org.uk](mailto:anna.whalen@stbasils.org.uk)) or  
**Val Keen** ([val.keen@stbasils.org.uk](mailto:val.keen@stbasils.org.uk)), the Youth  
Homelessness Advisers working for St Basils, if you wish  
to feedback or ask any questions about the content of  
this document.