

Positive Pathway Framework

Preventing
Youth Homelessness
and Promoting
Positive
Transitions



For ease of use this is an interactive document. At the top of each page you can click on each of the coloured tabs to quickly navigate to the beginning of each section within this document.

Contents

5

Executive summary

7

Introduction

14

1. Information and advice for young people and families (a universal offer)

19

2. Early Help - a targeted offer to young people at higher risk of homelessness

25

3. Integrated response for young people who need help with housing and a gateway to commissioned accommodation and support

35

4. Commissioned Accommodation and Support

44

5. A Range of Housing Options

51

Annex 1

Acknowledgments

In drawing up this revised version of the Positive Pathway framework we have consulted with and asked for help from a number of local authorities, youth homelessness agencies, national homelessness organisations, housing associations and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

In addition we have consulted with young people from National Youth Voice. This organisation is made up of around 40 young people who have experienced homelessness. They come from across the 9 regions in England. St Basils manage and facilitate the National Youth Voice, which is funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

We want to thank everyone for time they have given, coming to meetings, reading drafts of the document, sharing their examples of practice and what is working well. 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.

Executive summary

All young people need somewhere safe and suitable to live to help them make a positive transition into adulthood. Good housing underpins success in other areas of life. The Positive Pathway is about avoiding housing crisis and ensuring that homelessness is not part of young people's experience in England. It also sets out how to support young people to achieve positive outcomes in other areas of their lives alongside housing – for example in education, training and employment, health and emotional well-being. The Positive Pathway draws together expertise from local authorities, voluntary sector organisations and young people aged 16 – 25 across England on how to achieve this ambition.

The Positive Pathway framework has been developed for local authority commissioners, Children's Services and Housing Authorities, and for providers of housing and support for young people. It is intended to be used flexibly to suit local circumstances and needs, and provides a framework that local authorities can adapt to meet their aspirations for young people and their parents/families locally.

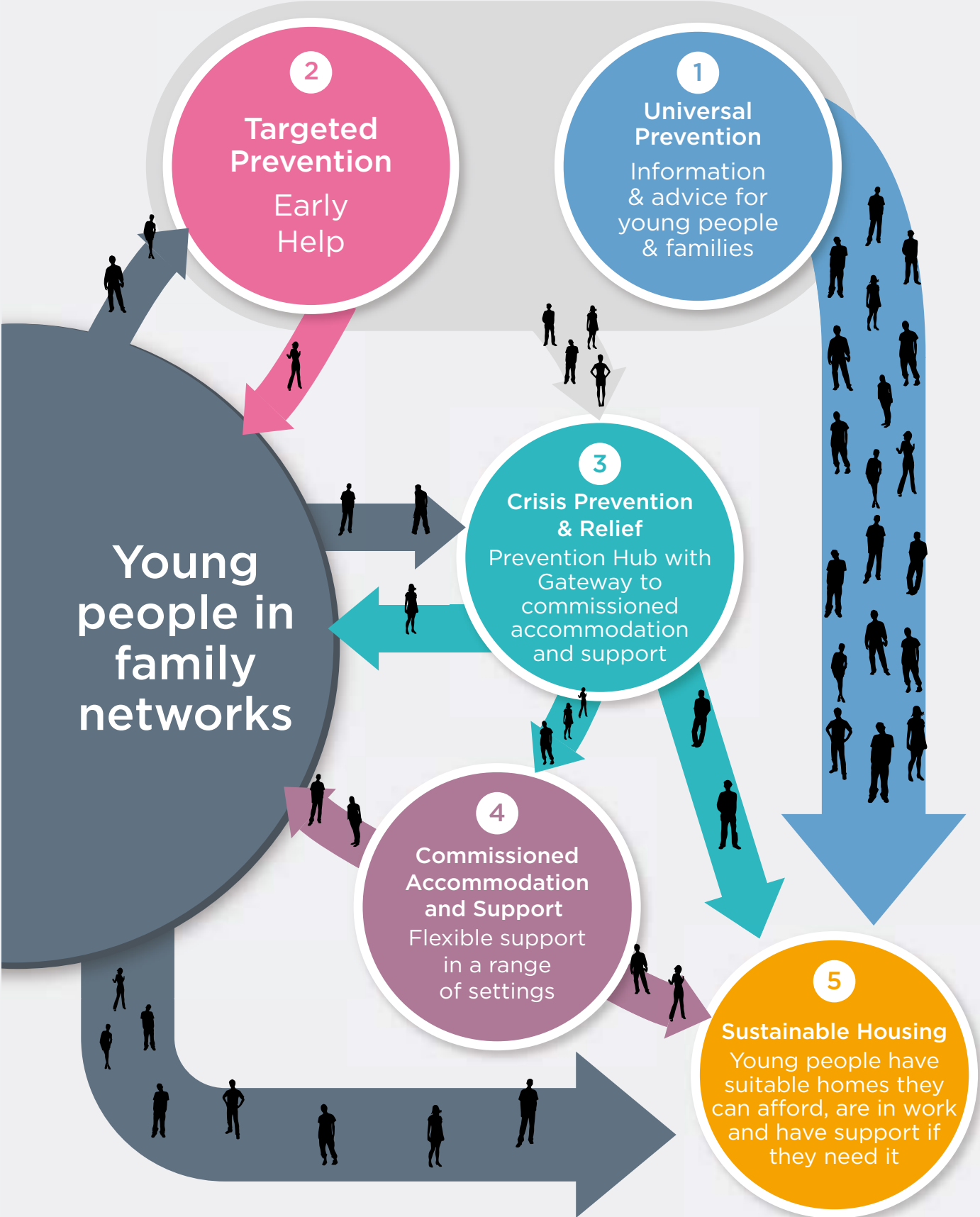
There are five stages to the Positive Pathway, but these are not intended to be sequential or linear.

1. **Information and advice** for young people and families which is available to everyone in the local area
2. **Early Help , targeted at young people and their families** who may be at higher risk of homelessness
3. **A Prevention Hub** - using a joint approach between Housing, Children's Services and other partners to resolve a housing crisis quickly. This also contains a single access point or gateway to commissioned accommodation and support
4. **Commissioned accommodation and flexible support**, based on what works well and developed according to local needs
5. **A range of housing options for young people** – affordable and safe housing options when young people are ready to succeed living independently

Using what works well, policy, legal duties and feedback from experts, including young people, the Positive Pathway has evolved to assist young people and local services based on the realities of the housing market and the challenges many families and young people face.

An independent evaluation of the Positive Pathway was carried out by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR) at Sheffield Hallam University in 2017 and the findings are available at <https://stbasils.org.uk/files/2017-05-21/PositivePathwayEvaluation2017.pdf>

Positive Pathway Framework



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 options for young people. It aims to help public sector commissioners and providers of services to work together in planning and delivering services for young people.

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have commissioned St Basils to update this document, as well as two others:

- Care leavers <https://stbasils.org.uk/thepositivepathway>
- Youth Justice Accommodation Pathway <https://stbasils.org.uk/thepositivepathway>

Who has helped to develop the Positive Pathway?

- local authorities
- social landlords
- homelessness organisations
- organisations working with young people
- young people

The Positive Pathway is also informed by national data and research, policy direction, what works well and learning from local authorities and other agencies.

Why is it helpful to use the Positive Pathway?

- It provides a positive prevention framework to identify what's in place, where the gaps are and commission what's needed. It is focussed on minimising crisis through upstream prevention and enabling housing supply.
- It provides examples of what's working well, checklists and tips.
- It's been updated to take account of recent changes to legislation on homelessness through the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which amended Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. This gives more focus on preventing homelessness and quickly 'relieving' homelessness for everyone in England who is 'eligible' under the homelessness legislation. See Annex One for more information on this.
- The Pathway covers all stages of young people's experience of housing options not just the crisis of homelessness.
- It's bespoke to young people and picks up on the other areas of their lives, such as mental and physical health and education, training and employment as they become young adults.
- It's also been updated using learning and evidence from an independent evaluation by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR) at Sheffield Hallam University in 2017. The findings of this can be found at: https://stbasils.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/5_PositivePathway_independentRapidEvaluation

How should the Positive Pathway be used?

Too often different parts of local authorities work in 'silos', but addressing youth homelessness relies on working together, not only within local authorities but also with other public bodies, voluntary organisations, young people and where possible, their families. The Positive Pathway framework does not look at housing and homelessness in isolation because addressing youth homelessness is more challenging than simply finding housing for young people.

The Pathway framework is designed to enable needs analysis and supply mapping in relation to each element; gap analysis and then identification of what needs to change. The objective is to move from crisis responses to upstream prevention and effective supply. This will require joint working, joint commissioning and a housing and support strategy for young people which enables them to learn and work.

By taking a more joined up approach in planning, commissioning and service delivery it is then possible to support young people to achieve other positive outcomes, for example:

- Education, training and employment
- Physical and mental health and well-being
- Living in safer communities

What makes the Positive Pathway work well?

The evaluation, undertaken by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR) at Sheffield Hallam University, found that the Positive Pathway framework is a robust framework that can be implemented in a wide range of different contexts - different local authority structures, different housing markets and different geographical areas. Many local authorities reported that the number of younger people becoming homeless as a result of an 'unplanned move' had reduced since they had worked more in partnership and developed some or all aspects of the Positive Pathway framework. In particular, single access points (sometimes called a 'youth hub' or a joint 'front door' into services) were leading to more young people returning home or to moving in with friends or other family members. One local authority reported that its hubs consistently achieved a prevention rate of around 85 per cent.

The evaluation indicated that using the Positive Pathway framework has had a direct influence on the supply of emergency and supported accommodation available to younger people facing homelessness. The framework has assisted local authorities to improve their data collection, needs analysis and referrals to supported housing and enables commissioners to respond better to the needs of young people by providing more appropriate accommodation.

Moving to a Positive Pathway approach takes time to achieve, as this often means some changes in commissioning and in local working practices.

What are the underpinning features of a Positive Pathway approach for young people?

- Making a **clear business case** for changes, drawing on, for example, increasing value for money, improving outcomes for young people, meeting of Children's Services 'sufficiency' duties¹ through local provision of supported housing; ensuring suitability of accommodation offered; increasing options for move on and thereby reducing 'silt up' of supported housing; reducing risks of rough sleeping amongst vulnerable young people and improving other outcomes for young people, such as training, employment and health.
- 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 Council services and other 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, 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.
- Supply and affordability - ensuring young people's housing needs are considered in housing strategies and when commissioning supply, so there is a **range of accommodation** which enables young people to live and work.
- 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 leads to excellence in provision and gives young people important learning opportunities for the future

The Legal Framework

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 introduced new duties to prevent and relieve homelessness. This is a significant change and means people at risk of homelessness get help much earlier. The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) published the **Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities** in February 2018, which sets out how local authorities should exercise their homelessness functions under Part 7 of the Housing Act, as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.²

In addition to this, the Department for Education and MHCLG published joint statutory guidance on 16 and 17 year olds who are homeless, which sets out both Children's Services and Housing Authorities' duties to this group of young people.³

1 As set out in Section 22G of the Children Act 1989, (as amended by the Children and Young Persons Act 2008) see here: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/23/section/9> and also here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/273812/sufficiency_-_statutory_guidance_on_securing_sufficient_accommodation_for_looked_after_children.pdf

2 See: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities>

3 See : <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/provision-of-accommodation-for-16-and-17-year-olds-who-may-be-homeless-and-or-require-accommodation>

The way the amended legislation works means there should be more intervention and support to prevent homelessness, and a reduction in intentionally homeless decisions. Joint working will further reduce this risk as well.

Personal housing plans (PHPs) must be drawn up for each applicant who is homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days. The PHP is based on an assessment of the applicants' housing circumstances, housing needs and support needs. The PHP sets out the 'reasonable steps' that the local authority will take to assist the applicant in retaining or securing accommodation, as well as the 'reasonable steps' that the applicant will take. See Annex One for more information

The legal framework that governs duties to provide housing, care and support to young people at risk of homelessness is complex.

TABLE 1 Legal Duties to Accommodate Young People – An Overview

Young Persons Age	Children’s Services Duties to accommodate young people	Housing Authority duties to accommodate single young people
16-17	<p>Young people who are already 'looked after' or have 'relevant child' status.⁴</p> <p>Homeless young people except where they decline Section 20 accommodation and are assessed as having capacity for making that decision.</p> <p>Young people who are not eligible for housing services due to their immigration status.</p>	<p>Young people whose homelessness cannot be prevented, and have declined accommodation and support offered to them as a Child In Need under Children Act 1989, Section 20, or have been found not to be a Child in Need.⁵</p> <p>Interim accommodation for young people where the first approach is to the housing authority. This would usually be set out in local joint working protocol between Housing/Children’s Services.</p>
18-20	<p>Former unaccompanied children who are seeking asylum, but are now 18 – 20 and awaiting a decision on their application to the Home Office.</p> <p>'Former relevant' children (care leavers) who are unable to access appropriate accommodation through other means.</p>	<p>Interim accommodation for young people who the local authority has reason to believe are or may be eligible, homeless and have priority need</p> <p>Main duty temporary accommodation for young people who are eligible, homeless, have priority need and are not intentionally homeless.</p>

4 An 'eligible child' is a 16-17 year old who is looked after, and has been for at least 13 weeks since their 14th birthday (Children Act 1989 Para 19B Sch2) and a 'relevant child' meets the same criteria but is no longer looked after (Children Act 1989 23a). Former 'relevant children' were eligible or relevant children who are now aged 18+ (Children Act 1989 23c (1))

5 In R (G)V Southwark 2009 the House of Lords described the very limited circumstances in which a homeless 16-17 year old might not be a 'child in need' (CIN) according to Children Act 1989 S17 (10). For example, a YP who had lived independently for some time, with a job, and nobody caring for them who had then lost their accommodation might not be assessed as a CIN. A YP who was homeless and had never successfully lived independently before with no support would almost certainly be a Child in Need

		<p>Young people who have been looked after under the Children Act for any period whilst 16-17 have automatic priority need.</p> <p>Other young people may be assessed as having priority need if they are significantly more vulnerable (for example because of their health, disability, history of abuse, time spent in prison or for other reasons) than an 'ordinary' person would be if they became homeless.</p>
21-24		<p>Young people without dependent children may be assessed as having priority need if they are more vulnerable than an 'ordinary' person would be if they became homeless; because of their health, disability, history of abuse, time spent in prison, because they have been in care, or for other reasons.</p>

Young people with multiple and complex needs

The Positive Pathway framework suggests developing housing and support options for all young people, including those with some of the most complex issues and 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 often called adverse childhood experiences or ACEs.⁸

Most Children’s Services, Housing Authorities and providers of supported accommodation have concerns about the rise in the numbers of young people with multiple and complex needs. This includes some young people who are looked after and care leavers, but also other young people who have not been in care, but are at high risk of homelessness or already homeless.

6 In R (on the application of SO) v Barking and Dagenham 2010 it was established that care leavers who require accommodation for their welfare, and cannot access it through other means, must be found accommodation by Children’s Services and if needed this must also be paid for by Children’s Services

7 See Annex One and see MHCLG Code of Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-8-priority-need> and also Shelter’s website here: https://england.shelter.org.uk/legal/homelessness_applications/priority_need/vulnerable_people/categories_of_vulnerable_people

8 Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are traumatic experiences that occur before the age of 18 and are remembered throughout adulthood. For more information see: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cm-sctech/506/50605.htm> and Public Health Wales - Welsh Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study 2015 <http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/888/page/88524>

In the most recent edition of Homeless Link's Young and Homeless report⁹ (2018) 82% of homelessness service providers who responded reported that the number of young people presenting at their services with complex and multiple needs has increased.

Throughout this document there are examples of different ways of delivering services for all young people, including those with complex and multiple needs. Commissioners and providers of services may find these useful when considering how to improve outcomes for these young people.

Pathway Framework: The 5 elements of the framework:

1 Universal 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.

2 Early help

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

Desired result: Young people stay in the family network where possible and safe to do so and some 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 single access point into locally commissioned supported accommodation and 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.

9 See here for the full Homeless Link report: <https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Young%20and%20Homeless%202018.pdf>

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. Flexible outreach support is also available to support young people wherever they live (including in the family home and also Housing First) and can 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 private rented or social housing. 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 more 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 floating support is available for those who need it.

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

1. Information and advice for young people and families (a universal offer)

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. This activity will usually be led by local authorities, in partnership with others.

Desired result: Young people and families have the information needed 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:

- Local authorities need to promote information around homelessness and housing through schools and colleges – having this may have helped us avoid becoming homeless
- Practical life skills should be taught throughout each school year within citizenship or personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) lessons – this would allow young people to have a fuller understanding of what is expected in adulthood
- Information should be provided using social media platforms used by young people and be well promoted in places young people go to
- Schools should hold information about services available to young people within the local area such as advice services, social activities, health and wellbeing, volunteering, work experience and further academic progression

More details on the Service

Local authorities have a legal requirement under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996¹⁰ to provide information and advice on:

- preventing homelessness
- how the council can help in securing accommodation when homeless
- the rights of people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, and the duties of the authority
- any help that is available from the authority or anyone else and how to access this

There should be clear information for some groups of people who are at higher risk of homelessness, including care leavers, people coming out of custody or hospital and people fleeing domestic abuse.

Every local authority must publish their 'local offer' for young people leaving care. This is set out in the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and includes information on the kind of accommodation options and assistance a care leaver should receive. See the Barnardos and St Basils' Care Leaver framework <https://stbasils.org.uk/thepositivepathway> for more information

10 For a summary of the homelessness legislation see Annex One or for a more detailed overview see the MHCLG Homelessness Code of Guidance here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/overview-of-the-homelessness-legislation>

The offer in this part of the pathway might include:

- Housing options education work in schools and colleges as part of financial literacy curriculum or as part of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). This could cover the reality of housing options/choices, the financial aspects of living independently, homelessness and how to avoid this and 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. This should include (but not be limited to) those organisations for whom there is a Duty to Refer under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (see Annex One).

Delivering this part of the Positive Pathway

Feedback from young people¹¹ consistently says they want and need good information on housing options and the realities of leaving home at a young age, but they do not usually get this at school.

Schools-based interventions are being used in some local authorities and charities, but provision is very patchy, and approaches vary significantly.¹² 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.

The health and relationships aspects of PSHE will be compulsory in all schools from September 2020.¹³ Though not yet compulsory, schools are still expected to cover the economic wellbeing and careers aspects of young people's lives, for example teaching about financial issues through maths and citizenship. Alternatively collapsed timetable days – a more concentrated approach to delivering PSHE – are a feature in some schools, where regular lessons are replaced by a small number of full days each year to look at PSHE 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.

11 The most recent example national example is taken from the Youth Homeless Parliament 2019 see : <https://stbasils.org.uk/news/youth-homeless-parliament-2019-speak-up-for-change/>

12 See Watts, Johnsen, and Sosenko, Youth Homelessness in the UK: A Review for the OVO Foundation: <https://www.ovoenergy.com/binaries/content/assets/documents/pdfs/ovo-foundation/youthhomelessnessbriefing.pdf>

13 See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/relationships-and-sex-education-and-health-education>

Reaching Young People

As well as reaching young people attending schools and colleges, there are other young people under the school leaving age who are not attending school or college. Some of these young people have a higher risk of being homeless at a young age, so consideration is needed about how to reach these young people, 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. The Mix (<https://www.themix.org.uk/>) provides support to young people by phone, web chat and text message, as well as a comprehensive website.
- Youth work sessions on housing options and homelessness prevention in schools, including Pupil Referral Units, or in youth provision 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 workshops, which can effectively engage young people.

EXAMPLE

Until It's Gone – Theatre as a medium for highlighting youth homelessness in schools

Since 2008, Zest Theatre has been working with local authorities throughout the UK to deliver Until It's Gone, 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, pupil referral units 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 and valued young people's feedback via social media, reaching over 5,000 young people each year and changing their perceptions of homelessness. Information can be found on the ZEST website:

<https://zesttheatre.com/until-its-gone>

EXAMPLE

St Basils PIE4Education is a new initiative from the St Basils' PIE team aiming to help schools become more 'psychologically-informed', particularly when working with young people who are struggling with emotional and psychological problems. Young people disengaged from employment, training and education are more likely to experience youth homelessness. However, other risk factors for homelessness such as mental health problems or learning difficulties, are also likely to impact on a young person's ability to engage positively with education. Recognising that some students are more likely to be temporarily or permanently excluded if school staff perceive they lack the skills or confidence to support them; PIE4Education is a strengths based approach drawing upon the learning from St Basils Psychologically Informed Environments (PIE) and focus groups with education staff. Evidence based psychological tools and models are taught in an experiential workshop format to staff groups to promote positive engagement and motivation. Education staff are also encouraged to reflect on the reasons behind problematic behaviour and maladaptive coping skills, in order to increase empathy and understanding. Additionally, staff teams are assisted to consider processes and practices in their school and identify elements that fit with a psychologically-informed approach and work together to target areas for improvement. Initial feedback from participants has indicated that the content and the format of the workshops have been useful, applicable and thought-provoking.

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 most up to date challenges within the housing market for young people. In most areas of England there are 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 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

EXAMPLE

Young Devon's Young People's Housing Advice website is part of their work to prevent homelessness occurring amongst young people in the county. The Devon Housing Options Partnership worked together to launch the Young People's Housing Advice website www.yhdevon.co.uk to give young people and their families an easy place to get local information about the kind of help they might be able to receive.

One of the strengths of the site was creating content where young people's voices are heard through sharing their lived experience, this is done to enable other families and young people to directly relate to the messages and content of the website. The video clips and information give an accessible route to getting local help and are often used by support workers to help families and young people understand options and manage their expectations about what is possible. The site is viewed locally as a helpful tool and is currently due to be reviewed to ensure that design and content continues to be up to date and remain accessible and relevant to young people.

Reaching other professionals

Short briefings that can be delivered periodically to teams working with young people and families can help to keep other professionals updated with housing options and other related information. This could include:

- Housing options for young people, affordability locally and welfare 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 duties that Housing Authorities have in relation to young people aged 16 - 25 who are or may be homeless
- The legal duties which Children's Services have in relation to homeless 16/17 year olds, looked after children and care leavers
- 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.

EXAMPLE

Universal work with young people and their families in Cumbria has been led by the County Council and the District Councils, who have worked together to develop and continually improve the Positive Pathway approach. This example is of their universal information offer, but they also work on Early Help, homelessness prevention, supported housing options and move on, using the Positive Pathway framework principles.

Using funding awarded by the local Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) Innovation Fund, Cumbria County Council, in consultation with partners, has developed two resources which provide universal information on homelessness and housing options:

- A website www.cumbria.gov.uk/yphousing aimed at 3 audiences: young people; parents/carers; and professionals. The website features short film clips of young people sharing their experiences as well as information and contact details for further advice.
- Two "Tackling Homelessness" lesson plans, which have been accredited by the PSHE Association and are available free of charge at: <https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/tackling-homelessness-lessons-key-stage-4-cumbria>. These aim to make young people aware of the realistic housing options for young people living independently aged 16+, talk about the financial realities of living independently at an early age and signpost them to relevant support. These can be delivered in local schools alongside other partners such as Nightstop. Cumbria County Council have also delivered a version of these sessions through the National Citizenship Scheme, during the last two summer holidays.

2. Early Help - a targeted offer to young people at higher risk of homelessness

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

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:

- Local authorities should consistently offer services such as family mediation and/or counselling with options for these to be held in formal or informal settings.
- Mediation should be accessible, prior to crisis to help reduce tensions within the family.
- Respite services should be made available to young people, where they can 'cool off' away from the family home and be supported by staff to return. This could include conflict resolution and resilience training.
- Consistent support should be made accessible to families, including initial access to social services prior to crisis arising.

The MHCLG Homelessness Code of Guidance identifies two key elements of a prevention strategy which the Positive Pathway framework covers:

- **Early identification** - identifying people at risk of homelessness at an earlier stage, and the interventions that might prevent them from being threatened with or becoming homeless;
- **Pre-crisis intervention** - proactive intervention where a household may be at risk of homelessness in the future, such as involving children's early help services to support families at risk of losing their tenancy.¹⁴

This is prevention work well before any imminent or actual threat of homelessness and the Code of Guidance states that upstream prevention activities are likely to produce direct savings in temporary accommodation and other costs for the authority, and will also help to reduce pressures on wider services, such as health, housing and employment, in the longer term.

Early Help is intervention that takes place well before homelessness may occur, rather than to help those at imminent risk of homelessness. The legislative framework places statutory responsibility for preventing and relieving homelessness amongst adults with Housing Authorities. For under 18 year olds, the primary responsibility lies with Children's Services. A lot of the work in this part of the Pathway is aimed at under 18s. This means that Children's Services in every area have a key responsibility and role to play in preventing under 18 year olds from becoming homelessness.

¹⁴ See the Homelessness Code of Guidance , Chapter 2, points 2.30b and 2.30c: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-2-homelessness-strategies-and-reviews>

The Service

Early intervention work aims to support young people at high risk of homelessness to stay in the family home/network where safe to do so. The focus is on planning and preparing with young people and their parents/family **before** they are in crisis – a critical element of the Positive Pathway. Childhood experiences/issues which can indicate a higher risk of early homelessness and future homelessness and multiple exclusion¹⁵ 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.

Note that based on the list above, it is likely that most young people or families are already known to services and agencies, but not because there was a threat of homelessness.

Considerations and tips

Many young people report that they do not know where to go to get help. The London Assembly Housing Committee estimated in 2017 that 4 in 5 young people try other options before presenting to a local authority about their homelessness¹⁶. In interviews for a report, ‘Preventing Youth Homelessness’¹⁷, one local authority stated that young people only presented at the local authority once “they have exhausted every friend.” 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
- Early help and targeted children’s and family services
- Youth Offending Services
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- Children’s Services – teenagers in care, on the edge of care, subject to child protection plans and child in need plans
- Troubled Families services
- FE Colleges
- Voluntary agencies

15 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 https://pureapps2.hw.ac.uk/portal/files/7456915/US_Pathways.pdf

16 London Assembly – Hidden Homelessness in London 2017, see: https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/london_assembly_-_hidden_homelessness_report.pdf

17 Reform – Preventing Youth Homelessness 2019: <https://reform.uk/research/preventing-youth-homelessness-assessment-local-approaches>

Professionals who do not work in housing related roles may have a more limited understanding of the difficulties of leaving home at a young age than those who work in housing and homelessness services. 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 **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. In many instances this should not be too challenging as young people and their families may well be in contact with other services already.

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 Children Boards¹⁸ currently 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 supports families who are struggling to cope with multiple problems such as unemployment; poor school attendance; health problems; involvement in crime; and domestic abuse. The criteria for the Troubled Family Programme and some of the causal factors which can lead to youth homelessness are the same, for example, involvement in crime and not going to school/excluded.

The programme provides targeted support to families with the aim of improved outcomes for the family members, resulting in reducing dependency on costly, reactive public services, and delivering better value for the taxpayer.

Each family has a key worker who establishes a trusted relationship with the whole family and agrees a plan which includes clear outcomes; offers practical assistance in the home such as parenting skills; and helps the family tackle their problems earlier before they reach crisis point, including co-ordinating the support of specialist services.

The programme’s aim is for all local services to work together to provide better coordinated and more effective support to families. Ipsos Mori’s independent evaluation of the programme shows local authorities are changing structures and processes, strengthening partnership working and promoting whole-family working¹⁹.

18 Note that Local Safeguarding Children Boards are changing their structures and names following the Children and Social Work Act 2017. See guidance here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/722306/Working_Together-transitional_guidance.pdf

19 See the Ipsos Mori evaluation, published in March 2019 here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/786889/National_evaluation_of_the_Troubled_Families_Programme_2015_to_2020_evaluation_overview_policy_report.pdf

The latest evaluation results show that, compared to families with similar characteristics who have not been on the programme, 19-24 months after starting to receive support, the proportion of children on the programme going into care has reduced by a third. This means that approximately 2,000 children a year do not become looked after as a result of the programme.

Local authorities will need 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, given the costs further down the line of meeting statutory duties to homeless 16/17 year olds and the poor outcomes associated with homelessness at a young age²⁰. For Children's Services in particular there is a strong spend to save argument for continuing to work with young people up to age of 18 and their families and more authorities are now extending their services in recognition of their legal duties and the risks experienced by some older teenage children.

Continuity of support, which is flexible enough to go beyond traditional service boundaries and follows young people after they reach the age of 18, can help to prevent later homelessness. Whilst Children's Social Care support is likely to drop away at the age of 18 unless a young person is looked after or a care leaver, other support could continue or be picked-up by commissioned services, dependent on how integrated the local service delivery model 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.

Mediation

Whilst mediation has a key role in prevention of homelessness at the point of crisis, earlier mediation, before there is an imminent threat of homelessness can remove any risk of homelessness occurring in the first place. Relationship breakdown has been shown to be the largest cause of youth homelessness, and family mediation can be an effective preventative strategy. Family mediation can provide a means of helping young people to remain at or return home, move out of home in a safe and planned way, and/or regain positive and meaningful contact with their families. It may be beneficial in improving family relationships even if the young person is not able to remain or return to the family home, which can be important in reducing future risks of homelessness.²¹

EXAMPLE

Providing an Early Intervention and Prevention Mediation Service

talk²sort is a Youth Homelessness Mediation Service which supports young people and their families across the sub-region of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. The service, delivered by The Bridge in the East Midlands, focuses on reducing conflict, strengthening relationships and communication as well as improving mental health and emotional wellbeing.

The talk²sort Mediation Service is funded by Leicestershire County Council Public Health Directorate, Children in Need, Leicestershire Police and Crime Commissioner and Charnwood Borough Council through their MHCLG Homelessness Prevention funding.

20 See 2008 DCLG report on statutory homelessness, Chapter 12: <http://womenshomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Statutory-Homlessness-in-England.The-Experiences-of-Families-and-16-17-Year-Olds.pdf>

21 See the MGCLG evaluation of Homelessness Prevention Trailblazers here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-prevention-trailblazers-evaluation>

During 2018/19, 150 young people and 119 families were supported. 100% of young people remained at home or were accommodated by other relatives; 92% reported improved communication, 89% improved relationships, 77% improved mental health and 96% felt they were able to remain in employment, education or training because of talk2sort's intervention.

The success of talk2sort is built on the following key principles:

- Prevention: young people and families access the service before reaching crisis point; drop in services are offered at schools and colleges which enable young people to talk confidentially to a mediator before committing to the process
- Facilitative and Transformative Practice: trained specialist mediators who support and empower young people and families to identify, explore and implement realistic and achievable changes; the service is well advertised and receives referrals from young people, parents/carers and a range of voluntary and statutory organisations
- Innovation: talk sort develops and utilises a range of creative and participatory approaches which enable young people, who may struggle to express themselves verbally, to explore their issues and problems
- Flexibility: individual and joint appointments are offered to young people and families with no time limit being placed on the support accessed or the number of appointments offered. Appointments are offered at a range of times (including evenings) and venues to suit the individual need of those accessing the service
- Independent and Impartial: talk2sort does not give advice, make suggestions or advise individuals or families as to what they should or shouldn't do. The number of referrals received through Early Help and Children and Families Services highlights the important role impartial voluntary services can play in providing early intervention support
- Value for Money: a low-cost early intervention and prevention service which generates significant cost savings to other, more expensive areas of public sector expenditure, including housing, health and social care

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.

EXAMPLE

Hull – Passport to Property

The Passport to Property programme is an integral part of Hull City Council's young people's accommodation hub, delivered in partnership between Targeted Youth Support Services and the Housing Service.

It's a prevention tool that is used where appropriate to assist young people to make planned moves out of the family home, rather than leave at a point of crisis. It in effect delays a move, and incentivises young people and their families to work towards a move when the young person is ready.

Offering both group and individual sessions the scheme aims to help young people further develop their skills and confidence to make positive and successful transitions to independent living and prevent homelessness through making planned moves with the family supporting the young person.

The programme is also offered to other young people who need skills and confidence to make positive and successful transitions to independent living or maintain an existing tenancy.

Upon completion, the participants receive an improved banding on the Choice Based Lettings Scheme, which enables young people to bid for social housing and a small furniture package to help them get started when they move into their new tenancy.

The programme provides an accredited ten-step approach covering key areas of support ranging from rights and responsibilities, budgeting and income, to keeping safe and avoiding isolation. Sessions are delivered both in local community settings, including across all the City's colleges of Further Education and also can also be delivered within family settings.

The different sessions are supported by a wide range of partners to provide additional advice and support regarding education and training opportunities and how to access other support services.

On completion, additional wrap around resettlement support and/or accommodation options can also be accessed through the accommodation hub where required.

3. Integrated response for young people who need help with housing and a gateway to commissioned accommodation and support

The Service: Led by the Housing Authority and Children's Services, there is 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. This is a critical 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 to suitable 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:

- We do not expect to be passed from service to service but offered a joined up working approach
- Local authorities should have one main base for homeless young people to access information, advice and guidance, prior to crisis and when crisis hits.
- When accessing local authority support we often felt distressed, vulnerable, as though we were a hassle, judged and not listened to.

Duties for Housing Authorities under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 – see Annex One) that would be delivered through this part of the Pathway include:

- Undertaking assessments and developing personalised housing plans for eligible young people, regardless of priority need and intentionality. The plans should set out the actions Housing Authorities and individuals will take to secure accommodation
- Delivering actions to prevent and relieve homelessness

Alongside statutory duties, new data collection requirements introduced alongside changes to the homelessness legislation mean that there should be improved local data on homelessness.²²

DUTY TO REFER

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 introduced a new 'Duty to Refer' on named public bodies to ensure that services are working together effectively to prevent homelessness. Where a named public body is aware someone may be homeless or at risk of homelessness, they have to make a referral, with the consent of the individual, to the Housing Authority the person wishes to be referred to. The duty to refer is intended to encourage local housing authorities and other public authorities to build strong partnerships which enable them to work together to intervene earlier to prevent homelessness through increasingly integrated accommodation pathways and services.

²² Often called 'H-Clic' data, the new sets of local authority level homelessness statistics can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/homelessness-statistics>

The public bodies included in the duty are as follows:

- a) prisons;
- b) youth offender institutions;
- c) secure training centres;
- d) secure colleges;
- e) youth offending teams;
- f) probation services (including community rehabilitation companies);
- g) Jobcentre Plus;
- h) social service authorities;
- i) emergency departments;
- j) urgent treatment centres; and,
- k) hospitals in their function of providing inpatient care
- l) The Secretary of State for Defence in relation to members of the regular forces (Royal Navy, Royal Marines, the army and the Royal Air Force)

Housing authorities should incorporate the duty to refer into their wider homelessness and rough sleeping strategy and update joint working arrangements accordingly, including local arrangements with agencies in regard to referrals. These arrangements should focus on identifying people at risk of homelessness as early as possible to maximise the opportunities to prevent homelessness.

Findings from an independent evaluation of the Positive Pathway in 2017 indicated that integrated hubs that combined advice, assessment, prevention and access to accommodation have a clear advantage in preventing youth homelessness²³

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 responding to any ‘duty to refer’ referrals relating to young people,²⁴ 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.

²³ See the Positive Pathway Evaluation 2017 here: https://stbasils.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/5_PositivePathway_independentRapidEvaluation.pdf

²⁴ See Government guidance on the duty to refer here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-duty-to-refer/a-guide-to-the-duty-to-refer>

Prevention of homelessness

There are a range of prevention tools which can be used to reduce homelessness. An underpinning 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 solution apart from emergency accommodation. Individual situations and needs have to be assessed and prevention tools used where appropriate, based on professional judgment.

There are some young people who cannot remain at home due to risk of significant harm or other factors. Assessment and professional judgment will determine which young people are at risk and do need to leave home.

Where there is a threat of homelessness from the parental or family home, but it may be possible to find a solution, a number of different interventions can assist.

Examples of interventions/activities that can be useful in preventing homelessness include:

- undertaking home visits to talk with parents/family and find out from their perspective what the issues are and how they could be resolved. Ideally this would be on the same day or within 48 hours;
- informal negotiation and mediation between family members;
- offering more formal family mediation or family group conferencing;
- referring families and young people to specialist debt and benefits advice services where there are tensions or problems with income, arrears or other debts;
- 'spend to save' to prevent homelessness through use of short term prevention funds (e.g. through use of Children's Services Section 17 budget and/or homelessness prevention funds) to relieve pressure in the short term on the family, for example if there is an urgent issue of arrears or a debt that needs to be resolved, or help with a bus pass to get to college or some furniture that might resolve sleeping or living arrangements;
- assisting with an application for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)²⁵ to assist with a gap in the rent or pay off arrears where this is deemed appropriate and permissible within DWP guidance on use of DHP;
- agreeing short term or longer term stays with extended family members/friends;
- assisting the young person to access education, training or employment – this may help in some instances to reduce tensions at home and may give a young person increased employment prospects as well as self-esteem;
- floating support in the family home if an agreement is reached about the young person being able to continue living at home. The purpose of this is to focus on independent living skills and on-going family support;
- assigning the young person a youth support worker where this is possible and additional support would assist their well-being;
- planning a move for the whole family (e.g. where overcrowding is an issue).

²⁵ Discretionary Housing Payments are payments at the discretion of the local authority which can help towards housing costs. They can be paid to individuals and households who are entitled to Housing Benefit or the Housing Costs element of Universal Credit. Discretionary Housing Payments can also be available for one-off costs like a rent deposit, rent in advance or removal costs on moving into a new home. See here for DWP guidance on use of DHP: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/827510/discretionary-housing-payments-guide.pdf

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, care leavers, those young people involved with criminal justice agencies 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.

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.

Within the services available could be support to access private rented accommodation and a linkage to the Housing Register, together with advice on benefits. Affordability is a major consideration for any new young tenant and landlord relationship and expectations about affordability, what that means and what landlords need to know, will need to be managed carefully with young people.

The information and advice on options would ideally build on the duty that housing authorities have to provide advice and information services to meet the needs of people within their district. As part of this duty they must design advice and information services to named groups who are likely to be at higher risk of homelessness including:

- care leavers
- people at risk of violence or abuse
- people released from prison or youth detention accommodation
- any other group that the authority identify as being at particular risk of homelessness in their district

A hub should build on the general information and advice duty, providing local information on options which is based on the reality of options and relevant specifically to young people. Within this the issue of affordability is a key one.

Assessment and planning to meet 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 the planning of the most suitable options for young people and the services they may need to support them.

Under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, if there is reason to believe a young person is homeless, or at risk of homelessness within 56 days, a homelessness assessment must be undertaken. 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. There is joint statutory guidance, published by MHCLG and the Department for Education, which reflects case law on homeless 16/17 year olds²⁶. See Annex One for more information.

Where a young person is eligible²⁷ and found to be homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days, an assessment of their housing needs, circumstances and support needs must be undertaken. From this a personalised housing plan will be drawn up, setting out the reasonable steps the young person will take and the steps the Housing Authority will take to prevent or relieve homelessness²⁸.

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

Personalised housing plans (PHPs) set out the 'reasonable steps' that the local authority will take to assist the applicant in retaining or securing accommodation, as well as the 'reasonable steps' that the applicant will take.²⁹ Other agencies can also be part of the PHP, with the applicant's consent. The steps the applicant will take should be realistic for them to achieve, and as part of this their age and maturity should be taken into account.

Consultation with the Youth Homeless Parliament members on personalised housing plans indicated that young people wanted plans which:

- Are individualised and based on personal circumstances
- Are realistic in terms of steps and timescales
- Are easy to read /without professional jargon so they are young people friendly

A single "gateway" into emergency accommodation and supported accommodation

In some 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 other options to prevent or relieve homelessness have been explored.

26 See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/provision-of-accommodation-for-16-and-17-year-olds-who-may-be-homeless-and-or-require-accommodation>

27 Homelessness Code of Guidance (MHCLG) – Chapter 7 : <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities>

28 Homelessness Code of Guidance (MHCLG) – Chapter 11 - see link above

29 Homelessness Code of Guidance (MHCLG) – Chapter 11 - see link above

A gateway or single access point into supported housing 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
- Better data on the housing and support needs of young people which can inform strategies and commissioning of services
- 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 services³⁰, where a young person is placed with a trained and vetted “host” in their own home for a few nights. There are 30 Nightstop schemes in England, all of which are accredited through Depaul UK
- 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
- Short term supported housing for young people, sometimes called assessment centres, where young people can stay for a limited period (for example, 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.

30 For an overview of Nightstop, see here: <https://uk.depaulcharity.org/NightstopUK>

It should be noted that bed and breakfast accommodation, including the use of hotels, is not deemed to be suitable by the Government. It should be used only if there is no other option and then only for very short periods of time. For some groups, including 16/17 year olds and care leavers, bed and breakfast must not be used.

There is more detail set out in the MHCLG Homelessness Code of Guidance regarding homeless households and use of bed and breakfast, as well as in the joint statutory guidance regarding homeless 16 /17 year olds and the Department for Education care planning guidance relating to care leavers.³¹

Considerations and tips

- Consider a single “front door” into housing options and support services for young people – learning from local authorities is that this improves the consistency of response and increases rates of prevention
- Make the business case for a more integrated way of working. There are helpful resources available to assist in redesigning public services³² 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 co-located or linked closely with an integrated service model include:
 - Careers advice
 - 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
- 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
- Channel all ‘duty to refer’³³ referrals from the named public bodies or ‘commitment to refer’³³ referrals into the service, so a more youth focussed response is offered
- Check which prevention tools are available and if any others could be added or accessed easily through improved joint working

31 See the Homelessness Code of Guidance Chapter 17, points 17.31 to 17.44 on use of bed and breakfast accommodation . Also see the jointly published statutory guidance on 16/17 year olds, Dept for Education and MHCLG here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/provision-of-accommodation-for-16-and-17-year-olds-who-may-be-homeless-and-or-require-accommodation> and also see Chapter 7 of The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations - Volume 3: planning transition to adulthood for care leavers (Department for Education) here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/397649/CA1989_Transitions_guidance.pdf

32 For example, see this set of public sector unit costings: <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/research/research-cost-benefit-analysis/> and also some Health and Social Care Unit costings, updated annually, are here: <https://www.pssru.ac.uk/project-pages/unit-costs/unit-costs-2018/>

33 The National Housing Federation is encouraging Registered Providers to refer to Housing Authorities any tenant where homelessness may be a risk. There is no statutory duty to do this, but guidance has been published to encourage them to do so: <https://www.housing.org.uk/resource-library/browse/commitment-to-refer-guidance-for-housing-associations/>

- Introduce routine home visiting where the cause of homelessness is threat of parental/family eviction. Within this, set out agreed criteria for joint home visiting between Housing and Children's Services for 16/17 year olds
- Ensure that there is continued focus on prevention work with young people who are in short stay or emergency accommodation, with an aim to restore young people to family or to suitable friends where possible.

EXAMPLE

Birmingham's Youth Hub

The Youth Hub is a multi-agency service, delivered in partnership between St Basils and Birmingham City Council's Housing Options and Birmingham's Children's Trust. The Youth Hub works with all young people in housing need, including care leavers, young people in custody and young parents. It offers specialist youth focused services to prevent and relieve homelessness, including housing options, advice and family mediation. Trained staff undertake housing 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
- Carrying out statutory assessments in partnership with the local authority
- Advice and help applying for a range of housing options, for example, supported lodgings, 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
- Accessible via Duty to Refer or a central telephone line called Youthline

The Youth Hub also provides a "gateway" into commissioned supported accommodation for all young people in housing need in Birmingham.

EXAMPLE

North Yorkshire

North Yorkshire County Council and the 7 District and Borough Councils commission a Young People's Pathway frameworkled on the St Basils Positive Pathway to Adulthood. Each Housing Authority hosts a hub with a multi-agency team of housing options and homelessness prevention workers from Children and Families Service and the voluntary sector working together to prevent and relieve homelessness. The services procedures are aligned with the Homelessness Reduction Act.

Prevention activity includes mediation with families, a joint working protocol to refer 16/17 year old who may require accommodation for a Child in Need Assessment on day one of enquiry and work with the private sector to prevent tenancy breakdown or find alternative accommodation. There is an option of advocacy for young people from the start of contact.

Emergency accommodation is provided through a commissioned Nightstop Service (for up to 14 nights) available both in and out of hours with the addition of 2 out of hours beds in the 24/7 provision accessed through the Emergency Duty Team. Young people who require supported accommodation have their support needs assessed by the Hub based on the Homelessness Outcomes Star framework. They are then allocated by the Hub to the commissioned provider that can best meet their needs. The Hub also monitor voids. Options include Supported Lodgings, 24/7 shared accommodation and dispersed accommodation. If a young person needs to be accommodated in a neighbouring housing authority their assessment goes with them.

EXAMPLE

1st Base in Greenwich, based at The Point, provides housing options and support services for 16-17 year olds, young people aged 18- 24 years and care leavers aged 18-24 who are at risk of homelessness, as part of an integrated youth service.

1st Base 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 the 1st Base Housing Inclusion Service. The 1st Base Team consists of Housing Inclusion Officers who work closely with Social Workers to a joint working protocol between Housing and Children Services to better support our young people. The Housing Inclusion Officer is responsible for completing a personalised housing plan (PHP) based on housing and support needs and works 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, informal mediation and act as the gateway to all young people's supported housing and floating support in the borough. Housing Inclusion Officers work with young people 16-24 to develop independent living skills and to sustain accommodation, including young people in social housing, supported 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

Bristol Youth MAPS

Bristol Youth MAPS is a multi-agency co-located youth homelessness prevention hub which was commissioned by the local authority in October 2017. The first 18 months have been a process of learning and development, particularly in relation to partnership working which have seen real improvements for young people at risk of homelessness, and a much more joined up service tailored to the needs of the young person:

- Co-location –MAPS enables young people to access a youth-oriented housing adviser in the same place as a statutory homelessness assessment and family work which is much more joined up than previously
- Improved systems –MAPS also provides a virtual hub connecting youth housing services. Case Review panels enable key partners to explore barriers and solutions for “hard-to-house” young people. These developed relationships have led to a much overdue update of the local Referral and Eviction Protocol for young people which has significantly improved the multi-agency response
- Helping young people to remain at home – MAPS was set up on the premise that, where safe, young people achieve better outcomes when they remain with their family. Whilst this can be challenging, there have been successes in helping young people to stay at home. Key to this has been mediation work alongside clear messages about the difficult reality of finding housing in Bristol for young people
- Evidence of reducing referrals to supported housing, emergency accommodation and numbers of 16 and 17 year olds becoming looked after through homelessness through more work to prevent homelessness

EXAMPLE

Pathways to Independence (P2i)

Somerset County Council with the District Councils established P2i 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 four locations across the county, with staff visits to clients also available, to ensure service provision across the rural areas in the county. Please see the P2i website for more information about their work here:
<https://www.p2i.org.uk>

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 can 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:

- Accommodation offered to young homeless people should be safe, secure, comfortable and clean
- Support plans within accommodation should be person-centred and used to support young people, assisting them with their goals and ambitions as young adults
- Accommodation providers should provide fun social activities for young people on and offsite, these can include volunteering opportunities and team building
- It has been noted that computers and digital devices should be accessible to ensure young people can complete, college work, job searches and housing applications
- Access to mental health services, counselling, benefit advice, substance misuse information or workshops, as well as developing practical life skills, should be available on-site and consistent to all housing providers

The Service

This part of the pathway will involve significant investment of public funds, hence the development of single access point or 'gateway' systems in many localities. This helps to ensure available 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.

It is important to understand that Housing Authorities have limited access to budgets for housing related support. In two-tier areas the budget is held by the upper-tier County Council unless there has been a local agreement to in effect transfer the budgets to the district or lower tier councils. Housing Authorities have statutory duties to provide accommodation services, but not the 'support' element. In many two-tier areas, local decisions driven by reduced budgets and demands on statutory services mean that supported housing options for young people aged 16 - 25 are very limited, with some County Councils only commissioning services for those they have a statutory duty towards - care leavers and homeless 16/17 year olds.

Even where Housing Authorities are involved in commissioning supported accommodation, the budgets (as well as possibly the capacity and expertise) available are not generally sufficient to commission services to meet the most complex physical, emotional and mental health needs. However, there are some examples of County Councils trying to maintain some provision for young people, either through funding being given to Districts to commission supported housing services directly or through creating pooled budgets between Adult Social Care and Children's Services, which still enable other 18 - 25s to access supported housing services.

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. Frameworks within local pathways include:

- Building based supported accommodation services with staff on site. These vary in size, facilities and the level of support provided to young people. Some of these may be foyers or schemes with similar expected outcomes in relation to education, training and employment. 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 frameworks 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 24 hour support is easily accessible to young people if needed
- 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 can stick with them when their circumstances change
- ‘Housing First’ services for young people with complex and multiple 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 from other countries when used for older people with multiple and complex needs. Three pilots, not specifically for young people, commenced in 2018 in Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region and the West Midlands, which will provide further evaluation and good practice

High rents, often associated with the additional housing management costs of supported accommodation, can be a significant barrier to young people entering low paid work. It is useful to bear this in mind when re-commissioning, so there are options available which are more affordable to young people in employment or apprenticeships.

The Fair Chance Fund

The Fair Chance Fund was an innovative three-year programme, funded by the Government and designed to improve accommodation, education and employment outcomes for homeless young people aged 18 to 24.³⁴ The programme was designed for young people who were likely to be at high risk of rough sleeping because local supported housing and general housing options were not available to them due to their high level of needs.

The importance of the Fair Chance Fund, in terms of learning is significant for all local authorities, especially commissioners of supported housing in terms of considerations for future commissioning for young people with multiple and complex needs. There are interim and final evaluations available on-line which give much more detail on this programme and the learning.³⁵

The criteria for entry into the programme was for young people:

- Aged 18-24 (21 and over if care leavers)
- Homeless and non-priority
- Not in education, training or employment (NEET)

34 Evaluation of the Fair Chance Fund- Final Report https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/793810/Fair_Chance_Fund_final_report.pdf

35 See here for the Fair Chance Fund evaluation: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fair-chance-fund-evaluation-final-report>

- A priority for Local Authority support but unable to be accommodated in a supported housing scheme as a result of:
 - Previous difficulties in, or eviction from supported accommodation
 - Security issues e.g. for young people involved in offending behaviour
 - Needs deemed too high/complex to manage within current schemes
 - Lack of specialist supported accommodation
- May be in priority need and intentionally homeless

It was funded on a 100% payment by results basis, with projects being backed by social impact bonds following a competitive bidding process. Social investors funded project providers to set up and deliver services, recouping their investments as and when outcomes were achieved, and triggering payments against a set of specific metrics and tariffs.

A total of 1,910 young people were recruited by the seven projects during the Year 1 recruitment period.

Accommodation outcomes included:

- 1,657 young people, or 87% of all participants, entered accommodation, of whom;
- 93% achieved a 3-month sustained outcome
- 86% achieved a 6-month sustained outcome
- 73% achieved a 12-month outcome
- 62% achieved an 18-month sustained outcome (53% of all participants).

Employment, education and training outcomes included:

- 33% entered employment – 623 young people. Most commonly this was in entry level posts in the retail, hospitality, construction and manual trades.
- 55%, achieved an entry to education or a training outcome – 1,042 young people. Most commonly this was short, internally delivered life skills or pre-employability provision.
- 13% undertook some volunteering work – 252 young people.

Young people engaging with the Fair Chance Fund were less interested in taking up education and training opportunities than originally anticipated, as more young people wanted to enter employment. Most projects re-profiled their education outcomes downwards to reflect lower than projected demand.

The learning across the Programme was in part related to how different provider organisations running the 7 projects experienced the challenge of a new way of working - a Social Impact Bond with 100% payment by results. There is learning around some of the positives and the challenges this presented some agencies. There is also learning about delivery models to support positive outcome for young people with multiple and complex needs, including:

- **Dedicated key workers providing holistic bespoke support:** through providing more intensive and personalised support, the ability to engage, develop trust, and act as advocates was important. Young people valued the sustained, responsive, emotional and practical support received, often in contrast to support received previously.

- **A housing-led approach:** the focus on accommodation as a key outcome enabled young people to progress into education and employment outcomes. Unsurprisingly, given the client group, some young people were not ready for living more independently and needed time in supported housing before moving on.
- **The three-year duration of the project:** because the young people had support for a minimum of 2 years, with no new young people joining the programme after Year 1, this allowed time for relationships and trust to be established and for the long-term support required for progression.
- **Flexibility of approach:** the programme and the funding model actively encouraged providers to determine their own models or 'theory of change' and if necessary adapt their ways of working - as long as these changes fitted with the funding arrangements and organisational ethos allowed. In order to achieve outcomes - and therefore payment - the providers added in new provision or staff with specialist accommodation, education or employment remits.

Therapeutic and Psychologically Informed Approaches

Some supported housing providers have developed accommodation and support models which are "psychologically informed" and/or use a therapeutic framework to respond to young people who have experienced complex trauma in their early lives. The approach goes beyond provision of housing with a support plan, with greater ambition to transform young lives. Psychologically informed services ensure staff are well trained to understand the emotional, psychological and behavioural impact of negative childhood experiences and their contribution to homelessness. This understanding underlies how staff relate to service users, the way key work sessions are delivered and additional support is provided, and arrangements are in place for psychological input and reflective practice.

Creating and embedding a Psychologically Informed Environment (PIE) approach takes time, it is not a model that can be introduced overnight, simply through staff training or re-decorating the building. Good practice guidance (funded by the then DCLG) on psychologically informed services for homeless people was published in 2012.³⁶ Homeless Link have also published a toolkit to support organisations adopt the PIE framework.³⁷ In addition, a case study outlining the implementation of a PIE at St Basils is available from the Housing LIN³⁸.

Progression

Supported housing generally offers a progression model, where young people can have planned moves based on individual needs and a readiness to succeed. In such models, 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. 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.

36. <https://eprints.soton.ac.uk/340022/>

37. <https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Creating%20a%20Psychologically%20Informed%20Environment%20-%202015.pdf>

38. <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/type/St-Basils-Psychologically-Informed-Environments-meeting-the-emotional-and-psychological-needs-of-young-homeless-people/>

Progression for the young person can also happen within a single type of accommodation providing the support required is flexible and adapts to the young person's development. Housing led approaches are an example where the young person may remain in the same property but support will flex around them. It is important to see progression from the young person's perspective and not just related to a type of model.

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, higher support provision when they are ready for moving on, because there is not enough housing supply to move them on to.

Commissioning

A wide range of organisations provide supported housing 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 or leaving care led by Children's Services

Several single tier and two -tier areas have worked to bring these separate systems together in the interest of improving value for money and increasing quality and local 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 purchasing, both within and outside framework contracts, and prices vary widely and not necessarily in line with service levels or quality.

Example

Nottinghamshire County Council has two sets of arrangements in place for the commissioning of supported accommodation which young people experiencing homelessness, looked after children and care leavers aged 16 -21 can access as part of their transition to adulthood. The young people's element of the County Council's housing related support budget was pooled in 2015 with the 16+ placement budget to achieve the scale of the provision.

Underlining the planning for the new model was a recognition that new provision needed to be able to support all young people, including those with multiple and complex needs and young people with an offending background.

There are two types of placements available:

- The main 16+ provision has 227 units of accommodation for homeless 16/17 year olds, LAC and Care Leavers transitioning from residential or foster placements and vulnerable homeless young people aged over 18. These services provide choice around housing options for young people via the provision of 'core' and 'cluster' accommodation which is grouped into 6 areas of the county. The 'core' services are staffed 24 hours a day and have appropriate levels of staffing to support young people presenting with a range of needs. In addition to the core service, there are 'cluster' units of accommodation which may be self-contained or small shared houses where staff provide visiting support. The support provided is responsive to the young person's needs and may increase or decrease to meet the needs of the young person.
- Individual placement agreements commissioned via a Dynamic Purchasing System with approved providers that are able to provide support for young people who need a greater level of support than is readily available within the main 16+ provision. These placements are sourced as a step down from residential before moving into the main provision, or where it is clear the Looked After child would not be able to sustain their accommodation within the main provision. There are a range of accommodation options available which include solo placements with staff available 22 hours a day, and small settings with visiting support.

A package of support is individually tailored and is responsive to the young person's needs. Within the main provision, young people typically enter a core service then progress on into cluster accommodation as their independence, resilience and ability to manage a tenancy improves. However, some young people may move directly into the cluster accommodation if this is deemed more suitable. Some young people may require a move from a more independent cluster property back into the more supported 'core' service if their needs would be met more appropriately in that setting. Similarly, some young people will move from the core service into a higher needs placement if this is more suited to their needs.

The commissioners believe that there has been improved value for money, compared to previous spot purchasing arrangements, and the quality of service delivery is high.

The commissioning model that has developed is a reflection of strong partnership working between the County Council and all the 7 District Councils in Nottinghamshire. This has led to a high level of consistency across the District Councils, which is expressed in the Care Leavers Offer³⁹, supporting care leavers to find suitable housing, and offer priority on Nottinghamshire housing waiting lists. Care leavers are also exempt from paying Council Tax in all the Districts and have access to free leisure facilities.

Building based supported accommodation comes with a package of support and communal services and facilities. These costs are generally met through a combination of local authority funding if support is commissioned, rent and service charges, the latter two primarily funded by housing benefit except for looked after young people. Referral agencies and commissioners should clarify the level of support and how it is paid for in non-commissioned supported accommodation.

Capital funding for supported accommodation for young people is available from Homes England through its Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme 2016 to 2021.⁴⁰

39. See the Nottinghamshire Local Offer to Care Leavers here: <https://www.nottshelpyourself.org.uk/kb5/nottinghamshire/directory/site.page?id=gYfxAlgcFWA>

40. See here for more information: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/shared-ownership-and-affordable-homes-programme-2016-to-2021-guidance>

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, not least because 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. However, a landlord can grant a licence, and a trustee or rent guarantor is not necessary for a licence to occupy.⁴¹

There will be local arrangements about how long a young person can stay in supported housing. Commissioners are generally seeking to limit the length of stay in this provision to a few months rather than, for example a couple of years. This is driven by the need to increase ‘throughput’. For many young people a few months in supported housing may not be enough time to be ready for more settled accommodation, unless this is part of a staged pathway geared to meet their needs. 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.⁴² 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

The Money House (TMH) is a homelessness prevention programme for 16 – 25 year olds which helps young people in, or about to move into housing, manage their money and remain independent. Participants gain practical financial and digital skills to pay their rent, bills and living costs whilst making informed choices about their future.

Topics taught during the course range from:

- Tenancy agreements – Rights & Responsibilities
- Cost of moving in
- Avoiding eviction
- Paying household bills
- Choosing utility providers
- Banking – Accounts & Savings.
- Borrowing safely.
- Budgeting – Weekly & Monthly
- Spending habits – Good & Bad
- Shopping – Offers, consumer rights
- Benefits – Entitlements & Universal Credit
- What’s next – Planning for the future?

41. Further guidance is available in the Shelter Good practice: briefing – Tenancies for minors here: https://england.shelter.org.uk/legal/housing_options/young_people_and_care_leavers/tenancies_for_minors

42. See Rebuilding Lives report, Kings College London 2016 here: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/scwru/res/hrp/hrp-studies/rebuilding>

Young people who complete the 5 day course are awarded with a Level 1 Money Management accreditation from ABC as well as an Entry Into Work Employability Module.

Sessions take place in a fully kitted out flat, not a classroom. Trainers help young people become more confident about money and living on their own by providing real-life skills in a unique setting that brings financial education to life and helps prevent homelessness.

TMH is part of the move on pathway in four boroughs and has houses in Greenwich, Newham and Westminster.

Housing:

- 3 times less likely to have problem arrears
- 64% drop in evictions for those 'at risk'
- 68% drop in arrears for semi-independent tenancies, 43% for fully-independent

- Financial Capability:
 - 45% reduction in bank charges & missing bills.
 - 22% increase in borrowing safely
 - 54% increase paying off debt regularly
 - 27% increase in confidence managing money – higher than national average.

- Financial exclusion of those not banking / saving / budgeting:
 - 22% increase in borrowing safely
 - 54% increase paying off debt regularly
 - 27% increase in confidence managing money – higher than national average

Evaluation includes NESTA Level 3 Standard of Evidence using comparison groups, independent assessment by ERS, a two year study of 839 individuals, intervention & control data from housing providers.

<https://mybnk.org/our-work/financial-education/the-money-house/>

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

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
- 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 is useful. This helps 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 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. Reciprocal arrangements can be agreed between a local authority and voluntary sector providers to provide move on accommodation for a few days before a return to the scheme to avoid eviction.
- 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 people due to come out of custody, as well as other young people.
- 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.

5. A 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. This may include creative approaches such as partnerships with learning providers and employers to provide dedicated accommodation that underpins participation in learning and work. There is access to flexible outreach support 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:

- Youth Homeless Parliament members felt that having easier access to the private rented sector and social housing would have helped them to avoid homelessness.
- Due to a lot of young people earning low incomes and / or being employed on zero hour contracts, private landlords in many areas will not consider young people.
- Accommodation should be offered in areas that young people choose, close to family networks and/ or educational providers.
- Young people moving into general needs accommodation have highlighted that they would like to continue to receive support about debt management and budgeting and social/ volunteering activities. These services should be open for young people to tap into when the need arises.

Evaluation of the Positive Pathway found that providing a range of housing options was a key challenge for full implementation of the Positive Pathway framework, and this was the part of the Pathway that many local authorities felt was hardest to influence. The more successful local authorities were attempting to use the social rented sector, often in a more creative way or the Private Rented Sector (PRS) to be more receptive to the needs of younger people. Better 'step down' solutions, the wider use of PRS access projects and the development of well-managed shared housing, can contribute to these ends.⁴³

Many Housing Authorities have developed private rented sector access schemes which provide opportunities for all applicants to access private rented accommodation. Additional Government funding was committed in 2018 for 2 years to develop or improve access to the private rented sector through 54 different schemes, some of which were across several local authority areas.⁴⁴ The level of help and support the authority is able to provide through such a scheme will vary to reflect local housing markets and available resources, but might include offers of bonds and guarantees, as well as payments towards deposits and incentives. Housing authorities will need to be mindful of the need to identify shared housing options for younger people, and will wish to work with landlords willing to provide suitable Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).⁴⁵

43. See the 2017 evaluation of the Positive Pathway here <https://stbasils.org.uk/files/2017-05-21/PositivePathwayEvaluation2017.pdf>

44. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/housing-minister-unlocks-private-rented-sector-for-most-vulnerable>

45. See the Homelessness Code of Guidance, Section 16.19 here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-16-securing-accommodation>

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 have tightened over several years and affordability remains a real challenge in most areas, 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. Local Housing Allowance levels for under 35s make private renting a challenge for young people who require benefit assistance.

Many local authorities and partnerships are working hard to find ways of making the rental market more accessible for young people, for example through:

- Pro-active support for 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
- Making the case for increased capital contributions to enable lower rents which allow young people to live and work benefit-free

EXAMPLE

St Basils runs the 'Live and Work' scheme in Sandwell in partnership with Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust. The scheme offers apprenticeships with the Trust and affordable rents with light touch support to young people who need it.

Private rent prices are continuously rising which ultimately leads to young people finding it extremely hard to become independent. The Live and Work scheme provides shared accommodation for young workers for £44 per week inclusive. This scheme is open to 16 and 24 year olds in the West Midlands who are employed – and is particularly ideal for apprentices and those on a low income.

The scheme is totally benefit free, which means that young people get the opportunity to Live and to Work without having to rely on welfare benefits. The independent evaluation showed that for every £1 of capital cost to develop the scheme, there is a £14 return to the public purse over 10 years.

The accommodation, home to 32 young people, comprised of 8 flats. Each flat has 4 bedrooms, with shared kitchen, dining and bathroom facilities. Its location is only 20 minutes away from Birmingham city centre with reliable transport links and good local amenities.

Since opening in 2015, the scheme has won numerous awards, including two for NHS partnership work and one for 'Excellence in Education', as well as the 2018 national Housing award for 'Outstanding approach to tackling Homelessness'

To find out more <https://stbasils.org.uk/?s=Live+anD+Work>

EXAMPLE

Future Builders

Developed and funded by OVO Foundation, Future Builders aims to break the cycle of homelessness for young people with low support needs. The programme is designed to address the lack of move-on options for young people who are ready to leave supported housing and want to access education, employment or training (EET).

By acquiring semi-derelict properties from local councils and housing authorities, Future Builders is able to provide safe, high-quality and affordable housing. The programme also offers opportunities to access EET to help young people move through the homelessness pathway into independent living.

Future Builders aims to:

- Create alternative and affordable move-on options for young people who have low support needs and are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- Provide young people with access to EET, and the opportunity to refurbish a semi-derelict property that will become their home
- Offer young people wraparound support to sustain their wellbeing whilst accessing EET and living in the properties.

Future Builders began as a pilot in Bristol in 2016 and has been expanding since. The programme is currently delivered across five areas in partnership with different agencies focussed preventing youth homelessness. These are:

- 1625 Independent People in the South West
- Roundabout in South Yorkshire
- St Basil's in the West Midlands
- The Benjamin Foundation in Suffolk and Norfolk
- The Rock Trust in Scotland

While the model varies slightly depending on local context, affordability is key to the success of Future Builders - rent across all of the locations is generally set at 30-40% of the market average.

Future Builders has worked with 119 young people to date. Of those who have moved on from Future Builders, 100% have moved on to a positive EET pathway and 98% moved on to a positive accommodation pathway. In Spring 2018, the University of the West of England conducted a social return on investment (SROI) study on the Future Builders pilot in Bristol which calculated that for every pound invested in the scheme, £11.10 of social value is created.

EXAMPLE

Commonweal Housing - the Peer Landlord model

Commonweal Housing, in partnership with Thames Reach, have been running a 'Peer Landlord' model for shared housing in London since 2012. The aim of the model is to provide 'supportive' rather than 'supported' housing for those with lower needs who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless: individuals who do not need the intensive support associated with supported housing, but equally for whom market PRS housing may not be available or yet the right option.

Company and support is provided by other residents rather than just by paid support workers. The 'peer landlord' is one of the tenants who is there to see the house runs smoothly, and has been trained in basic housing management and maintenance, as well as financial awareness and other relevant skills. They also provide informal peer support to their housemates.

Commonweal provides two houses under this model in partnership with Thames Reach, which runs a further three 'Peer Landlord' properties independently. The original supportive shared housing Peer Landlord model has been replicated by others notably Peter Bedford Housing Association in north London and Depaul UK who now have 5 shared houses from Commonweal and have ambitions for more offering move-on from their Nightstop and other services. Commonweal report that interest in the peer landlord model has come from a number of local authorities and housing providers.

EXAMPLE

Snugbug Houseshare

SnugBug Houseshare is run by Mosscafe St Vincent's Housing Association (MSV) in Manchester. It is open to any young person aged 18-35 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 and then have an interview prior to being accepted. Applicants are then 'matched' to vacancies to ensure sustainability in the properties they are moving to depending on the current household composition. The scheme is now managed by Shared Habitat; an ethical property management company that does not charge any fees to tenants and manages the tenancies and properties using 'intensive housing management' as was previously offered in-house. The rent is slightly higher than the usual Local Housing Allowance rate because it covers things like a weekly health and safety check and the provision of furniture, white goods, carpets and all utility bills and council tax. This Scheme has 9 properties in a range of areas and houses 29 young people at any time.

EXAMPLE

Hull Shared Accommodation Project

The Shared Accommodation Project within Hull City Council is a partnership approach between Children's Services and the Housing Service to promote a wider choice and broaden the range of available accommodation options to young people aged 18 - 25 who need accommodation because they are not able to stay at home or are leaving care.

The scheme forms part of an integrated pathway for young people to make more planned moves from home or care, avoiding the impact of homelessness. Providing safe, affordable and furnished accommodation in the city's social housing stock, the scheme offers city-wide locations to maximise the potential networks of support for young people in areas of their choice.

Each young person has a support worker and an agreed young person's plan. The scheme is part of a wider City Council young people's accommodation and homeless prevention hub, so young people benefit through access to wider co-located services and partners to make sure any support needs can be provided with a multi-agency response where required.

Alongside the prevention of homelessness the scheme also aims, through maintaining rent level to the local equivalent of the Shared Accommodation Rate, to enable young people to take up employment opportunities restricted by rent levels in other forms of supported accommodation.

To be eligible for the scheme a young person must be threatened with homelessness or in housing need. The scheme currently provides 46 tenancies to young people from a range of backgrounds including young people leaving care, those threatened with homelessness. The scheme will extend further by 2020 to provide accommodation for 59 young tenants across 26 properties.

In each property, tenants each have a bedroom and share a lounge, kitchen and bathroom. Works are carried out prior to the letting in accordance with the Crisis best practice guidance on sharing for young people. Properties meet the House of Multiple Occupation standards, although this is not a statutory requirement. In addition to this, in order to make properties more suitable for shared living, carpets are laid throughout and electric showers are installed. Additionally, all properties are fully furnished; with TV, TV licence and unlimited broadband. A weekly service charge of £9 - £15 per week (depending on property) allows the local authority to provide utilities.

The scheme to date has been positive. It is reported that tenancy sustainment levels are high and young people also have a high level of engagement in education, training and employment, as well as improved levels of confidence and self-esteem.

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. And some young people who ask for help from a Housing Options Service could be assisted to access accommodation without needing supported housing, with the type of available accommodation varying 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?

Wherever young people live, access to public transport and to local amenities (e.g. shops and primary health services) and 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.

- 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.
- 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.
- It is recognised that some young people, for example, those who have a disability 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. Any contract issued should have the flexibility to allow for this.
- Sharing in social housing could be developed by housing associations or a 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. Crisis has developed a toolkit for this called 'Spare to Share – A guide to letting and supporting shared tenancies in social housing'.⁴⁶
- 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.
- For shortfalls in rent in the private rented sector, some local housing authorities have been using Discretionary Housing Payments to help some local residents to maintain their tenancies on a short term basis. Some housing authorities have linked support to access employment which can then make the rent affordable in the longer term.

46. See: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/resources-for-practitioners/sharing-programmes/>

EXAMPLE

Doorway – Private Landlords Scheme

Doorway is a youth homelessness charity in Warwickshire that has been developing relationships with private landlords to secure accommodation. Doorway provide a range of both housing management and property management services to the landlords, and support to the tenants. In some cases, the properties are leased by Doorway.

Services offered to landlords include:

- Preparation of license and tenancy agreements
- Inventories
- Risk assessments
- Health and Safety inspections
- Assessment of potential tenants
- Rent collection service
- Monitoring of rent accounts

The scheme has increased the confidence and willingness of private landlords to let to homeless young people and has delivered 64 units so far.

Annex One

Homelessness legislation

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has amended Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 and places new legal duties on English councils so that everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness will have access to meaningful help, irrespective of their priority need status, as long as they are eligible for assistance.

The main measures introduced by the Act are:

- Improved advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness. LAs are required to ensure services are designed to meet the needs of particular groups that are at increased risk of becoming homeless, including care leavers and people released from prison or youth detention accommodation
- Extension of the period 'threatened with homelessness' from 28 to 56 days
- New duties to 'prevent' and 'relieve' homelessness for all eligible people, regardless of priority need and intentionality. Both duties last for up to 56 days. The 56 day period can be extended for anyone under the 'prevention' duty where homelessness is still a threat and could be extended for anyone who does not have a 'Priority Need' under the 'relief' duty
- As before, interim temporary accommodation will only be offered to people who are or may be: eligible, homeless and 'Priority Need'. Temporary Accommodation under the 'Main duty' is only offered to people who are eligible, homeless, 'Priority Need' and not intentionally homeless
- Assessments and creation of personalised housing plans, setting out the actions or 'reasonable steps' housing authorities and individuals will take to secure accommodation
- All care leavers under the age of 21 will be considered as having a local connection with an area if they were looked after, accommodated or fostered there for a continuous period of at least two years, which started at some point before their 16th birthday. If they are looked after by an upper tier authority, (a County Council) they will have a local connection to all the district housing authorities within the two tier structure
- Encouraging public bodies to work together to prevent and relieve homelessness through a new statutory 'duty to refer' placed on many public bodies:
 - o prisons;
 - o youth offender institutions;
 - o secure training centres;
 - o secure colleges;
 - o youth offending teams;
 - o probation services (including community rehabilitation companies);
 - o Jobcentre Plus;
 - o Social service authorities;
 - o emergency departments;
 - o urgent treatment centres; and,
 - o hospitals in their function of providing inpatient care.
 - o The Secretary of State for Defence in relation to members of the regular forces (Royal Navy, Royal Marines, the army and the Royal Air Force)

These public bodies must refer, with consent, someone who is or may be homeless to the housing authority of the person's choice.

While housing associations are not bound by this duty, they are encouraged by the National Housing Federation, the membership organisation for housing associations in England, to sign up to a voluntary commitment to refer cases of homelessness: <https://www.housing.org.uk/resource-library/browse/commitment-to-refer-guidance-for-housing-associations/>.

The Act is about providing more statutory assistance to more people, including single people who are not assessed as having a 'Priority Need', who previously may not have received significant or meaningful assistance. It brings about a culture change from a perception of systematic 'gatekeeping' whereby people were denied the chance to explain their needs and access services, and there were a significant number of 'intentionally homeless' decisions

When combined with the duties on public bodies to notify local authorities of a person at risk of homelessness, the legislation provides an impetus to improve pathways for young people who are at risk of homeless.

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) published the **Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities** in February 2018, which sets out how local authorities should exercise their homelessness functions under Part 7 of the Housing Act, as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Within the Code is more detail on all aspects of the homelessness legislation, including guidance on:

- Eligibility for assistance
- Duty to refer
- Homelessness or threatened with homelessness
- Assessments and personalised housing plans
- Preventing and relieving homelessness
- Priority need groups
- Intentionally homeless decisions
- Local connection and referrals to other local authorities
- Suitability of accommodation

The Homelessness Code of Guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities>

In relation to **16 and 17 year olds** who may be homeless, there is separate statutory guidance, jointly published by Dept for Education and MHCLG here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/provision-of-accommodation-for-16-and-17-year-olds-who-may-be-homeless-and-or-require-accommodation>

G v Southwark

In May 2009, the House of Lords made a landmark judgement in the case of R (G) v London Borough of Southwark which affects how local authorities provide accommodation and support for homeless 16- and 17-year-olds. The judgement ruled that:

- The primary duty to a homeless 16- or 17-year old is under the Children Act 1989 and the ongoing duty to accommodate and support that young person will fall to Children's Services. This will include the range of support available as a looked after child and a care leaver.
- Children's Services cannot avoid their duty to accommodate a homeless 16 or 17-year-old under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 by claiming they were providing assistance under section 17 or by helping the young person to get accommodation through the homelessness legislation.
- A homeless 16- or 17-year-old who applies to a housing authority should be provided with interim accommodation under the homelessness legislation. They should then be referred to Children's Services for an assessment of their needs under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

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