

Joint Protocol to Address the Needs of Homeless 16- and 17-year-old Young People

Version 3

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Introduction

In April 2023, Cumbria County Council disaggregated and joined forces with the three former District Councils in Barrow, Eden and South Lakeland to create a unitary authority. This is the newly formed Protocol for Westmorland and Furness to address the needs of young people, aged 16-17, who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Our core principle is that young people are better off living at home or within their family network, as long as it is safe for them to do so. Homelessness at a young age should be avoided wherever possible. This protocol concerns those young people where homelessness appears not to be immediately preventable and details what respective agencies will do to assess needs and support young people. However, we recognise that there is prevention work, which should be undertaken alongside statutory duties, and this prevention work may continue even once a young person has left the family/parental home, as over time it may still be possible to resolve conflict and/or reunite young people with their families, where it is safe to do so.

In this Protocol, we have:

- shaped our approach based on partnership working (Children and Adult Social Care, Homelessness Service teams, Positive Housing Pathway supported accommodation providers, DWP etc)
- incorporated feedback from young people we have worked with, or are working with
- retained a focus on homeless prevention where it is appropriate and safe to do so
- involved a range of stakeholders, including young people and partner agencies.

Key principles

We share a number of principles and beliefs about young people and their transition to independent adulthood. It is the responsibility of all agencies to help protect our young people and keep them from harm.

1. The parents of, or those with parental responsibility for, 16- and 17-year-olds are responsible for their children's welfare. Our key commitment is to keep families together in their homes wherever possible because this is best for children and young people.
2. Preventative work with young people and their families is one element within our Positive Housing Pathway. This work supports the principle outlined above; namely that, for most children and young people, staying in their family home (with support) is usually the best outcome for them.
3. It is the responsibility of all agencies to keep children and young people safe.
4. Bed and breakfast accommodation is not a suitable form of temporary accommodation for 16- and 17-year-old young people: this principle is re-emphasised by the statutory joint guidance.
5. The experience of homelessness is damaging to young people and to their life chances: the statutory joint guidance states that "it is in the best interests of most young people aged 16 or 17 to live in the family home, or, where this is not safe or appropriate, with responsible adults in their wider family and friends' network."
6. Children and young people should be given every opportunity to have a realistic understanding of the support and accommodation options available to them, and to make informed choices about their future.
7. All 16- and 17-year-olds, who present as homeless or are threatened with homelessness, will be referred into the Positive Housing Pathway via the First Contact Script. As part of this process all referrals for young people aged 16 and 17 years, who are homeless or threatened with homelessness will be shared with the Safeguarding Hub. The Safeguarding Hub will make a decision as to whether the young people are then transferred to Social Care teams for a Child and Family Assessment to be undertaken. Guidance for Social Workers to explain S17/S20 to young people will be attached at this point (see Appendix 1).
8. One element of the dialogue that will take place at a local level when the young person first presents, will be the offer of access to independent advocacy through the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS).¹ NYAS is always offered as part of the First Contact Script conversation but this is rarely accepted by the young person. However when a referral has been made, NYAS have been very responsive and supportive to young people who are experiencing homelessness or who are threatened with homelessness.

¹ [National Youth Advocacy Service](#)

9. Referrals will be discussed by a multiagency group, made up of core members (Youth Homeless and Housing Team, PHP Supported Accommodation Provider Managers, Homelessness Service Representatives and Nightstop) alongside any other relevant professionals, who are working with that individual young person. Actions for which agencies will take accountability will be agreed at these meetings and circulated to all attendees within 2 days.
10. Sometimes, and despite everyone's best efforts, the pathway agreed with the young person breaks down. There is an absolute commitment within this Protocol and the Positive Housing Pathway to ensure that in such cases the pathway is rebuilt, the young person can go back to the appropriate stage, re-engage and be reassessed by Children's Services, as appropriate and, as far as possible, held within the Positive Housing Pathway.
11. In all cases, a successful outcome will be defined by the young person and involvement by professional agencies will be agreed with the young person. Agencies will share information about a young person and their family, subject to their consent.
12. All agencies engaged in the implementation of this Protocol will work within the agreed escalation process. If any partners have a grievance with the Youth Homeless and Housing Team/Gateway Group process, this should be raised with the Chair of the Panel/Youth Homeless and Housing Team Manager. If the grievance is not resolved satisfactorily, then this should be escalated to the Service Manager for the Safeguarding Hub, Youth Homeless and Housing Team and EDT. For any grievances with PHP providers or other partners signed up to this protocol, their own escalation policies should be followed.

Our definition of success

Where it is safe for young people to do so, we will work with and support a young person to remain at home or within their family network, thereby preventing homelessness. A young person who is vulnerable, homeless and 16/17 years old will receive an efficient and seamless service which results in a successful outcome for them. That successful outcome, as defined by our young people, will be to be settled in independent and sustainable housing. To achieve this outcome, support agencies will adopt a Pathways approach, which means that they will work collaboratively together to make the process clear, seamless and effective.

Following extensive consultation with young people who have experienced homelessness, a number of key points emerged. These are:

Young people want:

- a single point of contact, not to be passed from pillar to post
- clarity about what will happen next, about what they can expect or limitations of what can happen
- to be listened to and helped to make informed choices (where appropriate)
- their wishes to be heard; they want someone to talk to who can explain what is going to happen and what could happen
- suitable emergency accommodation.

As professionals we want:

- decisions to be made in the best interest of each young person
- prevention of homelessness, where it is safe to do so, based on the judgement of the professionals involved
- relevant agencies to work together to support young people.

The Protocol has been rewritten and shared with all partners. It is reviewed annually by the Youth Homeless and Housing Team using comments/feedback from partners and young people. The Youth Homeless and Housing Team have delivered training and development sessions to ASYE Social Work Teams, Cared For and Care Experienced Team, Positive Housing Pathway partners, Lunch and Learn Sessions in the Safeguarding Hub and to team managers and stakeholders to ensure everyone is aware of the Joint Protocol and how to address the needs of 16–17-year-olds who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Young People's Positive Housing Pathway

Pathway ambitions

Our ambition for the young people in our service is that:

- young people receive the right help at the right time
- young people receive a service that is personalised to their individual needs, from a service offer which is consistent across Westmorland and Furness
- young people who access our services go on to experience a bright and fulfilling future, free from the threat of homelessness in adulthood.

Our ambition for this service is that, from the first point of contact with a young person who is experiencing homelessness/threatened with homelessness, everyone working in this service area sees the potential in that young person and plays their part in moving that young person from a point of crisis, to give them hope for the future.

Priority groups

Priority is given to:

- young people for whom the Council has a statutory duty (16- and 17-year-olds threatened with homelessness)
- young people for whom the Council has a statutory duty (formerly cared for young people)
- young people aged under 18 leaving custody.

Eligibility will remain for young people aged 18-24 years, dependant on capacity.

Young People's Positive Housing Pathway: stages

1. Universal information and advice

Our [youth homelessness information](#) is targeted at three core groups:

- young people
- parents/carers and
- professionals

The website contains information about our Joint Protocol and contact details for the Youth Homelessness and Housing Officers, who will work to support young people aged 16+ who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

The website has the most current version of the First Contact Script, this can be completed by any professional to help identify a young person's needs and to start their referral into the Pathway; this must be completed by the referrer in conjunction with the young person.

There are two First Contact Scripts to be used dependent on the age of the young person. Our website has links for both [First Contact Scripts](#).

We have developed two “Tackling Homelessness” lesson plans, and they are available free of charge upon request. These aim to make young people aware of the realistic housing options for young people living independently aged 16+, talk about the financial aspects of living independently at an early age and signpost them to relevant support. We are happy to co-deliver these in local schools, colleges or to other targeted groups. For further details, please contact a Youth Homelessness and Housing Officer (contact details in section 7).

2. Targeted prevention

In addition to offering general advice and information, our Youth Homeless and Housing Officers work with young people who are threatened with homelessness to explore their options and find an outcome that works for them. Our starting point is always that young people are better off living at home or in the wider family network, if it is safe for them to do so. We have well-established partnership working to ensure that the right agencies are supporting young people, based on their assessed need.

3. Gateway Group (Single Point of Access)

We have a Gateway Group, this is our single point of access for Westmorland and Furness into the Positive Housing Pathway and is attended by professionals only. We discuss and allocate referrals into the Pathway; these referrals are for emergency accommodation, short-term accommodation, homeless prevention and/or Youth Homeless and Housing Officer Support (including flexible support). The Gateway Group oversees all stages of the Pathway from referral to termination of support. It is solution focussed; it facilitates multi-agency discussions based around the needs of the young person and the sustainability of the support.

The Group meets fortnightly, on a Thursday afternoon, via Teams. The Group is chaired by the Manager for Youth Homelessness in Westmorland and Furness Council and core members include Youth Homeless and Housing Officers, Homelessness Service colleagues, short-term and emergency housing providers and other relevant local partners. Any other involved professionals are invited on a case-by-case basis.

When a young person has been allocated a Social Worker (for them to undertake a Child and Family Assessment), the Social Worker is invited to the Gateway Group; actions from the Gateway Group discussions are shared with all invitees. These notes are uploaded to the relevant case recording system (ICS/EHM). When the Social Worker is present at the Gateway Group, discussions always cover:

- the updated guidance for Social Workers on undertaking Child and Family Assessments for 16- and 17-year-olds who are homeless or threatened with homelessness

- the in-house E-Learning developed for Social Workers who are undertaking Child and Family Assessments for 16- and 17-year-olds who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
- the wishes of the young person in terms of how they want to be supported (S20/S17)
- the leaflet that is available to talk through or provide to the young person about next steps.

The Safeguarding Hub distribute the updated guidance re S17/S20 when allocating to Social Work Teams for C&FA to recap the points above, this includes links to the documents highlighted above. More information can be found on Appendix 3.

Young person's positive housing pathway referral process

Step 1: First Contact Script (FCS)

Completed online (either 16-17 years or 18-24 years) by professional with YP. Links for FCS can be found on page 10. The FCS automatically go to Youth Homeless & Housing Team mailbox once submitted (and automatically to Nightstop, if this has been selected).



Step 2: If the YP is 18+ or will turn 18 within 56 days

Subject to consent, the agency completing the FCS refers to relevant Homelessness Service under PDtR. Referrals should be made to the Homelessness Service Team in the locality. Links can be found on page 15.



Step 3: PHP initial review

Completed by Youth Homeless and Housing Officer. Email sent to referrer acknowledging receipt of FCS and advising when GG meeting will take place. Referral forwarded to relevant PHP supported accommodation provider. YP added to GG tracker.



Step 4: Urgent referrals

See Urgent Referral Procedure: referrer telephones hub, Youth Homeless and Housing Officer progresses accommodation discussions including Nightstop.



Step 5: Youth Homeless & Housing Officer processes the referral

And refers to the next available Gateway Group meeting and all relevant/involved professionals invited.



Young person's positive housing pathway referral process (continued)

Step 6: Young person added to Gateway Group Agenda

Provider arranges Pre-GG appointment.



Step 7: Getting to Know You (Mapping)

Completed by provider, either prior to Gateway Group as urgent referral, prior to Gateway Group as non-urgent referral, after Gateway Group as action.



Step 8: Gateway Group Meeting

Via Teams on alternate Thursday afternoons.



Step 9: Actions agreed

Recorded and distributed within two days of meeting taking place.

Westmorland and Furness Council operates a Signs of Safety approach and we have implemented this within the Positive Housing Pathway. This enables partners to adopt a strengths-based approach with our young people.

4. Commissioned accommodation and flexible support

In the Positive Housing Pathway, young people will receive a package of support based on their individual needs, which will be reviewed regularly. The aim of this support is to help the young person to move on and become self-sufficient and able to manage their own tenancy. Young people will be discussed by the Gateway Group (with consent via the First Contact Script) at the point of referral and providers will be able to bring young people, who are experiencing difficulties in their tenancy or who have unmet needs, back to the Group for discussion and/or identification of relevant actions/other sources of support. Providers will be expected to fully engage in the Gateway Group discussions and to be proactive about bringing back those young people experiencing problems so that we can actively manage tenancies and retain the young person within the Pathway as much as possible.

The Youth Homeless and Housing Officers are now offering flexible support (previously offered by the Housing Intervention Support Workers). They will offer tenure neutral flexible support to young people. This will mean that for older young people (18+), who are not accessing supported accommodation within the PHP, we will work with our Homelessness Service team to look at alternative housing solutions, including the private rented sector, and will attach support to the young person to give them the best chance of succeeding in their chosen tenancy. Flexible support will be allocated via discussions at the Gateway Group and could even be used to offer additional support to a young person in PHP supported accommodation, based on their unmet needs. Flexible support is dependent on capacity of the Youth Homeless and Housing Officers.

5. Range of housing options

We work closely with our Homelessness Service partners and with our supported accommodation providers, to assist young people to move on to suitable accommodation. The partnership working which has evolved over the past years of developing and implementing our Joint Protocol, has meant that we have good networks in place and can find creative solutions to enable our young people to progress through to a home, whether that is in social housing, the private rented sector or whether that equates to a return home. Our flexible support offer means that we can offer young people who are moving into their own independent tenancy for the first time, a period of support through that transitional period so that they are supported to get everything in place that they need.

Local arrangements: approach and flowchart

Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA)

The Homelessness Reduction Act came into force on 3rd April 2018. This gives housing authorities a duty to prevent and relieve homelessness where the threat of homelessness is within 56 days. The duty extends to addressing the causes of homelessness, as well as relieving the physical impact, in order to find a long-term solution and reduce repeat homelessness.

We acknowledge and agree with the Guidance provided by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in that, “It is therefore essential that Children’s Services and housing services work together to plan and provide services that are centred on young people and their families and prevent young people from being passed back and forth between services”.²

In Westmorland and Furness, this means that:

- for young people aged 16-17 years who are open to Child in Need and homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days, actions relating to their Personalised Housing Plan will be incorporated into their Child in Need plan
- for young people aged 16-17 years who are open as care experienced young people and homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days, actions relating to their Personalised Housing Plan will be incorporated into their Pathway Plan
- for young people aged 18+ years, who have a Pathway Plan and who are homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days, a Personalised Housing Plan must be completed by the local Homelessness Service Team. However, the actions within the Personalised Housing Plan should, where possible, align with the housing related actions within the young person’s Pathway Plan

Duty to refer

The Duty to Refer element of the HRA came into force on 01 October 2018. This places a duty on public authorities to notify their local Housing Authority when one of its service users may be homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days and if they agree to the referral. The purpose of this is to prevent homelessness where possible. Authorities must ask the service user how they can be contacted by the Local Authority and this should be shared in the referral. Following receipt of a referral, housing colleagues will contact the

² Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, April 2018 (updated 10/06/2024): Prevention of homelessness and provision of accommodation for 16- and 17-year-old young people who may be homeless and/or require accommodation. Guidance to children’s services and local housing authorities about their duties under Part 3 of the Children’s Act 1989 and Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 to secure or provide accommodation for homeless 16- and 17-year-old young people

young person to begin their homeless application. This will look at whether or not they take a duty to prevent or relieve homelessness within 56 days. Any referral made through the Duty to Refer will be recorded in the housing system for H-Click data.

The list of public authorities upon which the Duty falls, includes:

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

Subject to consent, the agency completing the FCS refers to relevant Housing Options/Homelessness Team (under PDtR) if 18+ or 18 within 56 days.

For further information and how to make a referral, please visit the [homelessness and sleeping rough section on our website](#).

Joint working

An integral element of the approach in Westmorland and Furness will be joint meetings between Housing and Children's Services/Youth Justice Service (YJS). For young people and their families, with whom we are working to prevent homelessness, we will aim to arrange a meeting with the Youth Homeless and Housing Officer and the young person. We recognise that this is an important part of homeless prevention and as part of the First Contact Script, the referrer makes a telephone call home to parent/carer to verify homelessness, when it is safe to do so.

We support young people to present as homeless at the place that is most appropriate for them.

Referrals

When a young person is homeless with immediate effect or threatened with homelessness, a referral to the Safeguarding Hub must be made. If the young person has nowhere to stay tonight, telephone contact should be made with the Hub as this is an emergency contact, with the First Contact Script emailed as soon as possible thereafter. The referral for the

young person will be passed from the Safeguarding Hub to the Children's Services Support and Protect Teams within 24 hours for assessment.³ The Support and Protection Team will provide a response (within office hours). The responsible team manager can always be contacted if a timely response is not forthcoming. The young person has the right to decline the assessment. When the Hub sends out for assessment, the updated guidance in relation to S17/20 conversations is included (see appendix 3). If a YP declines S20, they can request a reassessment at any point up until they turn 18.

Contact can also be made with the Youth Homeless and Housing Officer (see Section 7 for contact details) to gain further information or advice. There is an Urgent Referrals Procedure to be followed. This can be accessed by contacting a Youth Homeless and Housing Officer.

If the young person is homeless tonight, then family and friends' options should be explored or a referral made to Nightstop. This is part of the First Contact Script and is included in the initial conversation with the young person in terms of explaining what Nightstop is, checking whether this is something they need and requesting their consent to share their details with Nightstop. If a young person has consented to Nightstop, this option can be selected on the First Contact Script and once submitted, the referral is automatically sent to Nightstop to begin the risk assessment. An offer of a place with Nightstop is dependent on a young person's suitability for the service and availability of hosts. Nightstop is emergency provision outside of S20 and referrals are only accepted during office hours. If S20 has been declined by YP and emergency provision cannot be identified, S20 will be explored again as being the only option available.

If a young person presents to an organisation other than Children's Services out of hours, then the Emergency Duty Team should be contacted (see contact details in Section 7).

If a young person presents late in the day to an organisation other than Children's Services, then contact will be made as soon as possible with either Safeguarding Hub or the Emergency Duty Team (EDT) on 0300 373 2724. The referring organisation will update Safeguarding Hub/EDT of actions taken, phone calls made and inform them of where the young person is staying that night (if possible), seeking authorisation from EDT to find suitable, temporary accommodation. Emergency homelessness outside of normal office hours would be managed by EDT.

If a young person can demonstrate a local connection but their corporate parent is an authority other than Westmorland and Furness, we will assess their referral to the Positive Housing Pathway on a case-by-case basis taking account of the needs of current residents in schemes, waiting lists and voids. If no local connection is determined but there is a clear rationale for a referral to the area, we will consider these referrals on a case-by-case basis.

³ Audits are undertaken by the Service Lead for Youth Homelessness and Hub Service Manager to look at all referrals for 16/17-year-olds with a presenting issue of homelessness, who were not transferred to Support & Protect Teams for Child & Family Assessment. Within Social Work teams, monthly audits are undertaken and these should always include at least one Youth Homelessness audit.

If Westmorland and Furness is a young person's corporate parent and they want to be accommodated/supported out of Westmorland and Furness, their Social Worker can support them in looking at options, with advice sought from the Youth Homeless and Housing Officers.

Accommodation

Supported accommodation is commissioned for young people aged 16-24 years, who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and priority is given to:

- young people for whom the Council has a statutory duty (16- and 17-year-olds threatened with homelessness)
- young people for whom the Council has a statutory duty (previously cared for young people)
- young people aged under 18 leaving custody.

Through the Gateway Group, young people are allocated to services based on a discussion of their individual needs and the availability of a service to meet that need. Commissioned units within Westmorland and Furness are:

- Barrow: 14 units through Project John
- Kendal (South Lakes Foyer): 10 units through Riverside, and
- Penrith (Eden Rural Foyer): 5 units through Riverside

Financial arrangements

If a young person needs to claim personal benefit, they need to [make a claim for Universal Credit online at GOV.UK](#).

Once the claim is complete, they will be given an appointment to attend their local Jobcentre to present their ID documents, National Insurance Number, bank details etc. They will need to save their UC log-in details and log on daily to check for messages, 'to-do' list etc. If young people are being financially supported by parents/carers, they will be ineligible to claim personal benefit.

Once personal benefit is in place, an application for Housing Benefit can be made.

If a young person is ineligible to claim benefits and becomes cared for/is accommodated for the period of a social work assessment, then financial support (equivalent to benefits) will be provided by Children's Services.

Food parcels are available in the area. Contact details can be found in Section 7.

Protocol and Positive Housing Pathway implementation

The Protocol is reviewed annually by the Youth Homeless and Housing Team using comments/feedback from partners and young people.

Young person homeless or threatened with homelessness: Homeless prevention

Step 1: First Contact Script (FCS)

Completed online (either 16-17 years or 18-24 years) by professional with YP. Links for FCS can be found on page 8. The FCS automatically go to Youth Homeless & Housing Team mailbox once submitted (and automatically to Nightstop, if this has been selected).



Step 2: If the YP is age 16-17

FCS and Single Contact Form sent to Safeguarding Hub by referrer. If YP has nowhere to stay tonight, telephone contact to be made with the Hub as this is an emergency contact. If YP has somewhere to stay, Hub will create MASH episode in order to request more information from relevant agencies within 24 hours.



Step 3: Youth Homeless & Housing Officer processes the referral

And refers to the next available Gateway Group meeting and all relevant/involved professionals invited.



Step 4: Youth Homeless & Housing Officer forwards referral to supported accommodation provider (if applicable)

Provider progresses Pre-GG Conversation, where possible.



Step 5: Gateway Group meeting takes place (fortnightly on a Thursday afternoon, via Teams).

Actions agreed, recorded, and distributed within two days of the meeting.



Step 6: YP supported to make a planned move

With options to return home, if needed.

Young person homeless or threatened with homelessness: Homeless prevention (continued)

Step 7: If not multiagency supported (1)

YP can be supported to live independently, through Youth Homeless & Housing Officer Flexible Support.



Step 8: If there is multiagency involvement

Discussions to explore how best to support the YP.



Step 9: YP's homelessness can be prevented.



Step 10: Youth Homeless & Housing Officer processes the referral

And refers to the next available Gateway Group meeting and all relevant/involved professionals invited.



Step 10: If not multiagency supported (2)

YP can supported to remain at home through the Youth Homeless & Housing Officer Flexible Support.



Step 11: If there is multiagency support (2)

Discussions to explore how best to support the YP.

If at any point there are concerns for the young person's safety, possible CE risks, if there are safeguarding concerns or if the young person is homeless tonight, an urgent referral to the Safeguarding Hub must be made.

Young Person Homeless or threatened with homelessness: Homeless tonight

Step 1: First Contact Script (FCS)

Completed online (either 16-17 years or 18-24 years) by professional with YP. Links for FCS can be found on page 8. The FCS automatically go to Youth Homeless & Housing Team mailbox once submitted (and automatically to Nightstop, if this has been selected).



Step 2: If the YP is age 16-17

FCS and Single Contact Form sent to Safeguarding Hub by referrer. If YP has nowhere to stay tonight, telephone contact to be made with the Hub as this is an emergency contact. If YP has somewhere to stay, Hub will create MASH episode in order to request more information from relevant agencies within 24 hours.



Step 3: NYAS referral submitted by CSC

If YP consents to advocacy.



Step 4: If the YP is 18+ or will turn 18 within 56 days

Subject to consent, the agency completing the FCS refers to relevant Homelessness Service under PDtR. Referrals should be made to the Homelessness Service Team in the locality. Links can be found on page 27.



Step 5: Youth Homeless & Housing Officer processes the referral

And refers to the next available Gateway Group meeting and all relevant/involved professionals invited.



Young Person Homeless or threatened with homelessness: Homeless tonight (continued)

Step 6: Youth Homeless & Housing Officer forwards referral to supported accommodation provider (if applicable)

And provider progresses Pre-GG Conversation, where possible.



Step 7: Gateway Group meeting takes place

Fortnightly on a Thursday afternoon, via Teams. Actions agreed, recorded, and distributed within two days of the meeting.

If at any point there are concerns for the young person's safety, possible CE risks, if there are safeguarding concerns or if the young person is homeless tonight, an urgent referral to the Safeguarding Hub must be made.

Safeguarding Hub: next steps decisions

Step 1: Progress to referral for Children and Family assessment

SGHub attaches updated guidance on S17 and S20 discussions.



Step 2: Social Worker from Support and Protect Team makes contact with young person (YP) within 24 hours.

If YJS client/previous client within 3 months, Social Worker makes contact with YJS. Social Worker joint working arrangements agreed on case-by case basis by relevant Support & Protect Team Manager and YJS Manager.



Step 3

Children's Social Care Assessment must evidence consideration of the YP's support needs with consideration being given to S17 and S20 & YP's wishes.



Step 4: Young person is supported through S20 or S.17

S20 accommodation provided due to YP not having safe accommodation/no person to safely care for them and they have a clear wish to be accommodated/Cared For.

OR

S17 support provided via a CiN plan. This can include support with accommodation when the YP has declined to be Cared For.



Step 5: Outcome 1

YP becomes 'Cared For', living away from home

OR

YP is supported by Children's Services either to remain at home or to live independently.

Safeguarding Hub: next steps decisions (continued)

Step 6: If YP declines Child & Family Assessment

If YP is clear they do not want a C&FA but want to live independently with support, Social Worker discusses all options including Early Help Support.



Step 7: Outcome 2

Refer back to Positive Housing Pathway Gateway Group to explore options for YP to live independently, with support.



Step 8: Consent given for Early Help Support

EHA initiated, worry statements and plan agreed. TAFs in place.



Step 9: MASH episode



Step 10: Hub to request further information from relevant agencies to inform their decision making.

Information requested from agencies such as Police, education, health with a deadline of 48 hours for the Hub to make their decision (only done if YP has somewhere to stay tonight).



Step 11: Following MASH assessment - if progressing to Child & Family Assessment

Follow steps for flow above.



Step 12: Following MASH assessment - if decision is 'Provision of Information & Advice' or 'No Further Action'. This outcome is fed back to the referrer.

First contact script

First Contact Scripts which must be used to refer young people into our Positive Housing Pathway, are online forms.

The First Contact Script should always be completed by the agency to whom the young person presents, in conjunction with the young person. For young people aged 16-17 years, there is a section whereby the agency to which the young person has presented, is asked to contact parents/carers to gain their side of the situation, verify homelessness and mediate (where possible). This must always be done providing the call home would not put the young person at risk of harm. If this is not completed, a clear explanation must be provided in the 'response from parent/carer' box.

There is a leaflet for young people that has been developed in conjunction with Social Work colleagues and aims to give young people an idea of next steps once a Social Work referral has been submitted. The link for this leaflet is within the First Contact Script and can either be printed off and given to the young person, emailed to them and/or discussed with them.

Advocacy is a core element that is discussed within the First Contact Script. Formal advocacy through NYAS is offered, however the young person is also offered the opportunity to nominate someone they know to advocate for them, they can be invited to Gateway Groups and ensure that the young person's wishes and feelings are represented and respected.

The First Contact Script not only records relevant information about the young person's circumstances and support needs, it is the referral document into all services in the Pathway:

- Nightstop
- Supported accommodation
- Youth Homeless and Housing Officers (including flexible support)

If the young person is homeless, with nowhere to stay tonight, telephone contact should be made with the Hub as this is an emergency contact, with a copy of the completed script emailed as soon as possible thereafter to

safeguarding.hub@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk

The First Contact Script must always have the consent page completed to enable the referral to be progressed. This consent statement is in line with GDPR.

Local partners

Children's

| Named contact/agency | Address | Contact details |
|---|--|---|
| Denise Moore Service Manager: Safeguarding Hub Youth Homeless and Housing and EDT | Skirsgill Depot, Penrith CA10 2BQ | denise.moore@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk |
| Emma Dutton Youth Homelessness and Housing/ Safeguarding Hub Manager | Skirsgill Depot, Penrith CA10 2BQ | 07876 650164 emma.dutton@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk |
| Emmie Sutherland Senior Youth Homeless and Housing Officer | C/O The Hub, Project John 20-24 Cavendish Street, Barrow in Furness LA14 1SB | 07825 313726 emmie.sutherland@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk |
| Megan Walker Youth Homeless and Housing Officer | C/O The Hub, Project John 20-24 Cavendish Street, Barrow in Furness LA14 1SB | 07386 658909 megan.walker@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk |
| Safeguarding Hub and Emergency Duty Team | Skirsgill Depot, Penrith | 0300 373 2724 safeguarding.hub@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk |
| Safeguarding Hub Early Help Team | Skirsgill Depot, Penrith | 0300 303 3896 early.help@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk |

| Named contact/agency | Address | Contact details |
|--|---|--|
| Children's Services Support and Protect Team | Barrow, Eden and South Lakes Localities | 01229 408100 Press option 2 for Barrow, Eden, South Lakes |
| Children's Services Cared For and Care Experienced Team | Barrow, Eden and South Lakes Localities | 01229 408100 Press option 2 for Barrow, Eden, South Lakes |
| Nicola Jackson Early Help Officer, CSCP Team | Barrow and South Lakes Localities | 07825 011005 nicola.jackson@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk |
| Ros Rowcroft Early Help Officer, CSP Team | Eden Locality | 07920 296122 rosamund.rowcroft@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk |
| Laura Bush Targeted Youth Support Team | Barrow and South Lakes Localities | laura.bush@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk |
| Sally McIntosh Youth Justice Service Team Practice Manager | The Nan Tait Centre, Abbey Road, Barrow | 01229 407560 sally.mcintosh@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk |

Local Authority homeless/housing options

| Named contact/agency | Address | Contact details |
|---|---|--|
| Amanda Brierley Interim Operational Lead – Homelessness Service | Barrow Town Hall, Duke Street, Barrow in Furness LA14 2LD | 01229 876578 amanda.brierley@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk |
| Claire Watters Interim Strategic Lead, Homelessness Service | Voreda House, Portland Place, Penrith CA11 7BF | 01768 212275 claire.watters@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk |
| Katie Duncanson Senior Homelessness Advice Officer, Barrow Locality | Barrow Town Hall, Duke Street, Barrow in Furness LA14 2LD | 01229 876458 katie.duncanson@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk |
| Nicola Dixon Senior Housing Options Officer, South Lakes Locality | South Lakeland House, Lowther Street, Kendal LA9 4QD | 01539 793364 nicola.dixon@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk |
| Angela Harvey Town View Fields Hostel Manager, South Lakes Locality | South Lakeland House, Lowther Street, Kendal LA9 4QD | 01539 734476 angela.harvey@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk |
| Emma Harrison Housing Options Manager, EHA | Blain House, Bridge Lane, Penrith, Cumbria, CA11 8QU | 01768 861499 emma.harrison@edenha.org.uk |

Partner/interdependent agencies

| Named contact/agency | Address | Contact details |
|--|---|--|
| Julia Winder Inspira, Barrow Locality | Inspira, 237-241 Dalton Road, Barrow in Furness LA14 1PQ | 01229 615314 julia.winder@inspira.org.uk |
| Victoria Emmett Inspira, South Lakes Locality | South Lakes Foyer Yard 95A, Stricklandgate, Kendal LA9 4RA | 01539 730045 victoria.emmett@inspira.org.uk |
| Susan Watkins Inspira, Eden Locality | Carlisle Office, 28 Lowther Street, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA3 8DH | 01228 596292 susan.watkins@inspira.org.uk |
| National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) | Egerton House, Tower Road, Birkenhead, Wirral CH41 1FN | 0808 808 1001 (helpline) |
| Barrow Food Bank | Abbey Road Baptist Church, Abbey Road, Barrow-in-Furness LA14 5EY <i>Monday: Deliveries Only in the Borough of Barrow.</i> <i>Tuesday: 11am – 1pm.</i> Collection Only. <i>Wednesday: Deliveries Only in the Borough of Barrow.</i> <i>Thursday: 11am – 1pm.</i> Collection Only. <i>Friday AM: Deliveries Only in the Borough of Barrow.</i> <i>Friday PM: 1pm – 3pm.</i> Collection Only. | 01229 343436 projectmanager@barrowfoodbank.co.uk |
| Ulverston Satellite Food Bank | Bethany Church, Lightburn Road, Ulverston, Cumbria LA12 0BX <i>Monday: 11am – 1pm.</i> Collection Only. <i>Thursday: 11am – 1pm.</i> Collection Only. | 01229 343410 07542 112976 (opening hours only) |
| Kings Food Bank Kendal | Kings Food Bank, Kendal Tuesday – Friday, 12-3 | 07532 335 735 kingsfoodbank@gmail.com |

| Named contact/agency | Address | Contact details |
|--|---|--|
| Jobcentre Plus (Barrow Locality) | Craven House, Michaelson Road, Barrow in Furness | 01229 893227 |
| Jobcentre Plus (Eden Locality) | 19-24 Friargate, Penrith CA11 7QH | 01768 242863 |
| Jobcentre Plus (South Lakes Locality) | Kentmere House, 1 Blackhall Road, Kendal, LA9 4BS | 01539 795000 |
| Jobcentre Plus (South Lakes Locality) | Kentmere House, 1 Blackhall Road, Kendal, LA9 4BS | 01539 795000 |
| Angela Powis Manna House, Kendal | Castle Lodge, Aynam Road, Kendal LA9 7DE | 01539 725534 angela@manna-house.org.uk |
| Springfield, Kendal | Church Road, Kendal | 01539 720313 |
| Captains Jenny and Stuart McPhee The Salvation Army, Penrith | Penrith Corps, Hunter Lane, Penrith CA11 7UY | 01768 866732 Stuart.McPhee@salvationarmy.org.uk |

Appendix 1: Guidance for social works to explain S17 and S20 to young people

Safeguarding Hub attaches this guidance when sending out for assessment:

Dear [insert allocated Social Worker]

I understand that you have a young person who has presented as homeless and has been referred to your team for a Child and Family Assessment. You will be aware that we have a Joint Protocol relating to young people who are aged 16/17 years and homeless/threatened with homelessness. The Westmorland and Furness Protocol is can be found on this page of the Youth Homeless and Housing website. The website also contains specific information targeted at different groups so that young people, their parents/carers and other professionals can be signposted to access the relevant sections.

Feedback from Ofsted has been consistently clear that that young people who present as homeless aged 16-17yrs require a social work assessment. The Protocol and Ofsted are clear that assessments on these young people need to:

- include full consideration of their history
- evidence consideration of how the young person's support needs will be met with due consideration being given to S17 and S20
- evidence the young person's wishes with regards to S20

We know that this has been highlighted as an area for improvement by Ofsted and we have already implemented a number of measures to highlight/improve this; these include an audit framework relating to youth homelessness (work that is undertaken at the Hub, in an Early Help setting and at a social work level). Inclusion of the above elements in social work assessments is one of the aspects audited to ensure we are appropriately meeting our duty to this specific group of young people.

If you have any queries relating to the Protocol, please contact Emma Dutton, Youth Homeless and Housing Manager on emma.dutton@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk.

We know that this has been highlighted as an area for improvement by Ofsted and we have already implemented a number of measures to highlight/improve this; these include an audit framework relating to youth homelessness (work that is undertaken at the Hub, in an Early Help setting and at a social work level). Inclusion of the above elements in social work assessments is one of the aspects audited to ensure we are appropriately meeting our duty to this specific group of young people.

If you have any queries relating to the Protocol, please contact Emma Dutton, Youth Homeless and Housing Manager on emma.dutton@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk. If you

have any area specific queries or are looking for some additional support for a young person who is homeless/threatened with homelessness, please contact one of the Youth Homeless and Housing Officers for your area:

Emmie Sutherland, 07825 313726

emmie.sutherland@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk

Megan Walker, 07386 658909

megan.walker@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk

The legal definition of services provided under Section 17 and Section 20 Children Act 1989 and Leaving Care Act

This practice guidance is intended to be used by social workers when explaining the options open to a 16 or 17-year-old young person who is immediately homeless or imminently homeless. It should be used with the young person to explain the legal differences of service provision, the implications of this and what they can expect from the service.

Please use this in conjunction with the Good Practice guidance and leaflet for young people.

What does Section 17 mean?

Children in Need are defined in Section 17 (10) of the Children Act 1989 as:

- those unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health and development unless the local authority (that is social care) provides services
- those whose health and development is likely to be significantly impaired unless the local authority provides services
- in the case of homeless 16- and 17-years olds if they do not want to be accommodated under S20 and are judged to have the capacity to make this decision then accommodation can be offered under S17 with a CIN plan in place.

Exceptions

If the child/young person is not in the local authority's judgement a child/young person assessed to be "in need" as under Section 17 or Section 20, this may be because they had been living independently for some time prior to their homelessness.

Note that in nearly all cases a child/young person being homeless and their parents being unable to provide them with accommodation or care would result in such significant challenges to a child's welfare that the child will be a Child in Need.

What can the young person expect?

- they will have an allocated social worker
- they will have an assessment of their needs, through a Child and Family Assessment
- the assessment will look at all their needs including education and health, and relationships in the family
- they will have a Child in Need plan, which is a written plan of their needs, who is going to help and when they will do this
- the CIN plan will be reviewed every month, all the people who are supporting the young person will attend the meeting to make sure the plan is still meeting their needs
- the social worker will visit at least every 4 weeks
- the social worker will be the contact if the young person needs anything
- the social worker will help to find accommodation, this may be at South Lakes Foyer (Kendal), Eden Rural Foyer (Penrith) or Project John (Barrow), in supported housing

What does Section 20 mean?

Requires that every local authority shall provide for any Child in Need within their area who appears to them to require accommodation if:

- There is no person who has Parental Responsibility (PR)
- The child/young person is lost or abandoned
- The person who is caring for the child/young person being prevented from providing the child/young person with suitable accommodation or care

S20 (3) Every local authority shall provide accommodation for any child in need within their area who has reached the age of 16 and whose welfare the authority consider is likely to be seriously prejudiced if they do not provide them with accommodation

S20 (4) A local authority may provide accommodation for any child/young person within their area (even though a person who has parental responsibility for them is able to provide them with accommodation) if they consider that to do so would safeguard or promote the child/young person's welfare.

Exception

There are only 2 circumstances in which a local authority might find that a homeless young person should not be accommodated under section 20 and may instead be owed duties under the Housing Act 1996. This is where the young person is:

- not a child in need
- a 16 or 17-year-old who having been properly and fully advised of the implications and having capacity to reach a decision, has decided that they do not want to be accommodated under S20.

What this means for the young person

- at age 16 or 17 a young person can consent to be S20 becoming looked after
- children's Services will arrange somewhere for the young person to live
- the young person may live in supported accommodation, with foster carers or in a residential home
- the social worker will complete an assessment called a Child and Family assessment. It will look at all the young person's needs, education, health, identify etc. as well the best place for them to live
- the social worker will speak with the family network and support a move home if it is safe to do so
- the social worker will visit at least every 4 weeks to set off with
- the young person will be offered an Initial Health Assessment to check their health is OK
- there will be a Care Plan in place that will identify actions for people to help
- an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) will be assigned
- the IRO will review the care plan every to make sure that it is still supporting the young person and that they still need to stay as a child looked after

Possible implications of being looked after

This needs to be explained to the homeless 16 or 17-year-old as their decision about receiving homeless services under Section 17 or Section 20 Children Act 1989 may have implications for assistance in the future and what they may be eligible for as a care leaver.

Eligible Young Person

- Young person in care on or after their 16th birthday
- Young person in care for 13 weeks or more after their 14th birthday.
- Young person still in care and aged 16 or 17

The young person can expect:

- the young person will have a social worker and a Pathways Advisor (PA)
- the young person's PA will stay involved until the YP is 21 years old or potentially 25 years old, dependant on their needs
- the young person will either be accommodated under S20 (Children's Act 1989) or looked after/in care under S31 (Children's Act 1989)
- the local authority will pay for young person's accommodation and subsistence when leaving care (if there are living independently and not able to claim via DWP)
- the young person's social worker is the main point of contact

- the young person will have a pathway assessment and plan developed by the social worker, involving the young person and other relevant involved people (including their PA). This will be reviewed every 6 months as a minimum
- the young person's pathway plan will be SMART. It will include accommodation, focussing on the young person's needs and aspirations as part of a bigger picture linked to their health, education/employment plans, family and/or support networks
- the young person will have access to a "Setting up House" allowance to cover essentials such as curtains, bed and bedding, white goods, and a television. This payment is to cover the whole period as a care experienced young adult and as such, spending is considered very carefully. Links to the up-to-date allowances and the local authority care leaver offer can be found at [Care Experienced Offer](#).
- the young person will become "Former Relevant" at age 18.

Relevant Young Person

- young person was in care for 13 weeks or more after their 14th birthday (this does not need to be continuous)
- young person left care on or after their 16th birthday
- young person is aged 16 or 17

What a Young Person can expect:

- the young person may have a PA but no social worker. The young person's PA will stay involved until the young person is 21 years old or potentially 25 years old, dependant on their needs
- the young person will have a pathway assessment and plan developed by the social worker, involving the young person and other relevant involved people (including their PA). This will be reviewed every 6 months as a minimum. Once they become a relevant young person, the PA is the plan writer
- the young person's pathway plan will be SMART. It will include accommodation, focussing on the young person's needs and aspirations as part of a bigger picture linked to their health, education/employment plans, family and/or support networks.
- the local authority will pay for young person's accommodation and subsistence (if living independently and not able to claim via the DWP)
- the young person will have access to a "Setting up House" allowance to cover essentials such as curtains, bed and bedding, white goods, and a television. This payment is to cover the whole period as a care experienced young adult and as such, spending is considered very carefully. Links to the up-to-date allowances can be found at and the local authority care leaver offer can be found at [Care Experienced Offer](#)
- the young person will become "Former Relevant" at age 18.

Former Relevant Young Adult

- the young adult is aged between 18 and up to 21 and have previously been a relevant or an eligible young person
- aged between 21 and up to 25, have previously been a relevant or eligible young person, and have requested support from Children's Services

The young adult can expect

- the young adult will have a named PA
- the young adult will have a Pathway Plan coordinated by their PA. The Pathway Plan will be reviewed every 6 months, or if there is significant change in circumstances, and this is done by the PA with the young adult and any other relevant professionals, family, or any other person, who is important to the young adult
- provide or pay for accommodation during college or university holidays if you are studying away from home
- The young adult will have access to a "Setting up House" allowance to cover essentials such as curtains, bed and bedding, white goods, and a television. This payment is to cover the whole period as a care experienced young adult and as such, spending is considered very carefully. Links to the up-to-date allowances can be found at and the local authority care experienced offer can be found at [Care Experienced Offer](#).

Qualifying Care Experienced Young Adults

Aged between 16 and up to 21 (or up to 25 if in education) who:

- left care on or after their 16th birthday and who were looked after for less than 13 weeks since their 14th birthday
- are on a SGO or were on an SGO when they reached 18 and were looked after immediately before the making of that order.

The young adult can expect:

- advice and support
- the local authority to keep in touch
- provide or pay for accommodation during college or university holidays if the young adult is studying away from home
- in exceptional circumstances find the young adult somewhere to live and provide support financially.