

# Protocol for Care Experienced Young People

Version 2

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## Introduction

The purpose of this document is to set out how the Children's and Housing Teams within Westmorland and Furness Council will work with our Choice Based Lettings partners to ensure that:

- care experienced young people across Westmorland and Furness get a consistency of service<sup>1</sup>
- joint working between services is paramount and starts at an early stage
- as far as possible care experienced young people are supported to make planned moves into accommodation, so they do not need to access the safety net offered through an emergency housing route, and
- when care experienced young people are homeless or threatened with homelessness, we have a clear understanding of what support can be offered and by whom<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> When we talk about care experienced young people, we are referring to those young people who are leaving care; young people who are care experienced have told us that this is the language they prefer.

<sup>2</sup> Please note that Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC), who are of an age to be leaving care, will also fall within the remit of this Protocol and will be entitled to a full Leaving Care service.

## Children's Services Offer

This section sets out the support and entitlements owed care experienced young people by Westmorland and Furness Council, dependent upon their leaving care status.

The Council's [offer to care leavers](#) is regularly updated.

### 16/17-year-old eligible young people

- The young person will have a social worker and a Pathways Advisor (PA).<sup>3</sup>
- 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 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 the 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 Home" allowance to cover essentials such as curtains, bed and bedding, white goods and television. This payment is to cover the whole period as a care experienced young person and as such, spending is considered very carefully. [Information about Setting up Home, including up to date allowances.](#)
- The young person will become "Former Relevant" at age 18.
- All Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) who come into care, will be entitled to a full Leaving Care service, as outlined above.
- Those UASC, who are aged 18 years and still waiting for the outcome of their asylum application, will continue to be supported by the local authority for their accommodation and living costs until the outcome of their application is known.
- Those UASC, who are aged 18 years, have had all rights refused and have no right to remain and do not qualify under the Human Rights Assessment, would not be entitled to support from the Local Authority for their accommodation and living costs. These young people would be referred to the Home Office Adult Services.

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 1 for additional information on the roles of the social worker and PA.

## 16/17-year-old relevant young people

- The young person will have been in care for at least 13 weeks on or after their 14th birthday AND will have had time in care on or after their 16th birthday but are no longer looked after by the local authority.
- The young person may have a PA but no social worker. <sup>4</sup>
- 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 the 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 young person will have access to a "Setting up Home" allowance to cover essentials such as curtains, bed and bedding, white goods and television. This payment is to cover the whole period as a care experienced young person and as such, spending is considered very carefully. [Information about Setting up Home, including up to date allowances.](#)
- The young person will become "Former Relevant" at age 18.

## 16/17-year-old qualifying young people

- The young person will have left care or Special Guardianship order and is not regarded as an "Eligible" young person.
- The young person will not generally have a named PA or Pathway Plan.
- The young person will be able to request advice and assistance but this is at the discretion of the local team manager, dependent upon the needs of the young person and capacity within the local team.
- The young person remains "Qualifying" at age 18.
- The young person may have been a relevant child but has successfully returned to parental care for over 6 months and therefore reverts to qualifying. If this has broken down pre 18 then consideration should be given to changing their status.

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix 1 for additional information on the roles of the social Worker and PA.

## 18 Year Old Former Relevant

- The young person will have been either “Eligible” or “Relevant” whilst aged under 18.
- The young person will have a named PA.<sup>5</sup>
- The young person 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; this is done by the PA with the young person and any other relevant professionals, family or any other person who is important to the young person.
- The young person will have access to a “Setting up Home” allowance to cover essentials such as curtains, bed and bedding, white goods and television. This payment is to cover the whole period as a care experienced young person and as such, spending is considered very carefully. [Information about Setting up Home, including up to date allowances.](#)

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix 1 for additional information on the roles of the social worker and PA

## Housing offer: planned move

### Housing Offer: care experienced young people making a planned move into accommodation

It is important all services working with young people deliver a consistent message around accommodation, so a young person understands how we work together to support them and help them to develop the independent living skills needed to sustain a tenancy.

### Young person aged 16+

During the Pathway planning process when the young person is aged 15½ – 16, the Children's Services' Youth Homeless and Housing Officers can be engaged in the planning process discussions around housing options to ensure that these are realistic. The relevant officers for Westmorland and Furness are:

[emmie.sutherland@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk](mailto:emmie.sutherland@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk) - 07825 313726

[megan.walker@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk](mailto:megan.walker@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk) – 07386 658909

The Youth Homeless and Housing Team have worked together with the Cared For/Care Experienced Team on a pilot process to capture young people who are Cared For and who would like/need a move to semi-independence post-16. A separate form has been created for this process to avoid completion of the First Contact Script, as this is a planning process, as opposed to a homelessness issue. This process will be reviewed in June 2025.

If the young person is aged 16 years and is planning to live in Westmorland and Furness, they should be supported by their social worker/PA, to register online with [Cumbria Choice Based Lettings](#).

When a young person is making an online Choice Based Lettings application, they will be asked to choose which housing provider will administer their application. Once the young person is registered, the social worker/PA should complete the Registration of Applicant for Care Experienced Young People form (Appendix 2) in conjunction with the young person, and upload this to the young person's application.

From April 2022, Cumbria Choice have a new platform/website enabling applicants to manage their own application and place bids more easily online. Notifications, such as review letters will be sent via email. PA's may want to consider adding their contact details (email address/contact number) if it is thought that the young person may not act upon notifications.

Applicants under the age of 18 can register but will be made inactive until 2 months before their 18th Birthday, at which point the young person or their PA must inform Cumbria Choice so their application can be activated. Providing all eligibility criteria is met (please note any



outstanding arrears and ASB will be taken into consideration) and the following applies, Band A will be awarded and the young person will be able to bid on properties

**Band A: Additional preference for Westmorland and Furness Council Care Experienced Young people (Former Relevant children) as defined by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and need to move on**

Applicants must be a former “Relevant Child” as defined by the Children Leaving Care Act 2002 and be a young person threatened with homelessness. The evidence to support this award will be provided by the council’s leaving care service and will consist of confirmation that:

- a) All referrals by Children’s Services will be made following the provision of Westmorland and Furness’ Joint Protocol for Young people.
- b) The care experienced young person is ready to move to independent settled housing and is genuinely prepared for a move to independent living.
- c) The care experienced young person possesses the life skills to manage a tenancy including managing a rent account.
- d) The care experienced young person has either long term or medium-term tenancy support arranged, as required.
- e) Ongoing support needs have been assessed and, where appropriate, a support plan is in place, and
- f) the CCP’s assessing officer agrees that due to the nature and extent of their vulnerability, accommodation in the private rented sector would, through its short-term nature, have a detrimental effect on their well-being.

**Note:** Care experienced young people will be awarded Band A on proof of their status. If an application for housing is made before it has been determined by the CCP assessing officer that the individual is ready for independent living, taking into account information from the applicant’s support worker and other agencies, the application will not have any bid considered until the support worker presents the evidence to the CCP that the individual is ready to move on and the CCP agree with that evidence.

Under the Choice Based Lettings Policy 16- and 17-year-olds can be offered a tenancy however this would mean that they would be offered a tenancy “in trust”; someone, with legal authority i.e. parent, grandparent or social worker, would have to sign the tenancy on their behalf. This would only happen if a young person’s PA provides a supporting letter stating that the individual is ready for independent accommodation.

Where applicants in Band A have not bid within 3 months of being awarded Band A

Band A is an award of additional preference based on an applicant's very urgent need to be housed. The need to house someone urgently will be undermined if the applicant fails to bid because they may, for example, be waiting for the 'perfect property' to become available.

Therefore, an award of Band A will be reviewed after 3 months for any applicant who has not bid, or where the view is that bids have been made but are not realistic.

## Young person ready for move on to supported accommodation

When a young person is approaching their 18th birthday, they will be thinking about their next steps and where they would like to live. For some young people who are turning 18, their next housing move may still be into supported accommodation to enable them to continue to develop their independent living skills.

For young people, who are aged under 18 years, their PA/Social Worker should complete a First Contact Script for 16- and 17-year-olds, in conjunction with the young person, in order to be referred into the Positive Housing Pathway.

[First Contact Script online form and information.](#)

The scripts, which are online forms, are automatically sent to the Youth Homeless and Housing Team. All referrals into the Positive Housing Pathway are discussed at a Gateway Group (single point of access to the Pathway); these take place fortnightly, on a Thursday afternoon, via Teams. Gateway Groups have a core membership and additional professionals, who know the young person being discussed, are invited – these invites can be extended to anyone who is supporting the young person and include someone the young person asks to be their advocate.

The purpose of these multi-agency discussions is to identify the next steps to progress the young person's referral and include identification of the relevant services to support the young person and actions will be allocated to relevant professionals to enable this.<sup>6</sup>

The accommodation, which is commissioned as part of the Positive Housing Pathway, has three priority groups, of which care experienced young people are one.

## Young person ready to move on to independent living

For young people who are looking to live independently aged 18 years with their current placement coming to an end on their 18th birthday, their social worker or PA should contact their local housing team a minimum 2 months before the young person turns 18 years.

Ideally (following best practice) contact should be made much earlier e.g. 6 months in advance of the young person turning 18 years. This will enable the young person, their PA

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<sup>6</sup> See [Westmorland and Furness Young peoples' Positive Housing Pathway Leaflet](#)

and the Homelessness Service Offer to explore accommodation options, carry out an assessment of their housing needs and plan accordingly.

When a care experienced young person is turning 18 years, is ready to live independently and wants to apply for a property through Cumbria Choice Based Lettings, their PA will need to complete an Activation for Care Experienced Young people' Priority Band A (Appendix 3). This will confirm that the young person is ready to start bidding through CBL, will provide relevant updates (as appropriate) and will give consent for their PA to be contacted and involved throughout the process. It is recommended that PAs attend property viewings and tenancy sign-up meetings (or ask a colleague to attend in their place), as far as possible.

Young people who are making the transition to live independently can be referred (or re-referred) back to the Positive Housing Pathway's Gateway Group to explore whether flexible support would be needed to help the young person experience a positive start to their tenancy; this service can also help with sourcing basic items of furniture for those young people in need.

A First Contact Script for 18-24 Year Olds will need to be completed in conjunction with these young people. The online form will be automatically sent to the Youth Homeless and Housing Team and the young person will be added to the agenda for the next Gateway Group.

[First Contact Script online form and information.](#)

## Housing offer: young person homeless or threatened with homelessness

### Housing offer: care experienced young people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness within 28 days

If a young person (aged between 16-24) is homeless or threatened with homelessness and they wish to apply for supported accommodation/Nightstop/flexible support, a First Contact Script must be completed.

[First Contact Script online form and information.](#)

Following on from this, the young person will be discussed at the next Gateway Group; these are multi-agency discussions to explore what services can be offered through the Positive Housing Pathway and will involve all relevant agencies including the young person's PA and social worker, an officer/manager from the relevant locality's Housing Options Team, a representative from Project John or Riverside (as the providers of short-term accommodation within the Positive Housing Pathway), Nightstop, representatives from the Westmorland and Furness Youth Homeless and Housing Team, and any other relevant, involved professionals. These discussions will cover issues such as whether a Public Duty to Refer has been done and what can appropriately be shared from the young person's Pathway Plan.

Care experienced young people who are provided with temporary or supported accommodation, are responsible for managing their accommodation, and keeping to the conditions of the tenancy or accommodation agreement. This includes paying their accommodation charges, being responsible for their own behaviour, the behaviour of their visitors, and engaging with support providers.<sup>7</sup>

If a care experienced young person does not keep to the conditions of the agreement, they are at risk of losing their accommodation. If a care experienced young person is living in supported accommodation and is felt to be at risk of losing their tenancy, the Sustaining Tenancies and Eviction Prevention (STEP) Procedure will be followed. This focuses on early identification of tenancies which may be at risk, early intervention and early referral back to the Gateway Group for multi-agency discussions and identification of further support (for more information, see the STEP Procedure – a Youth Homeless and Housing Officer can provide you with a copy). If a care experienced young person is in temporary accommodation, Housing and Children's Services (through the young person's PA) will work together on all cases where a care experienced young person is at risk of losing their accommodation to provide the necessary advice and support about future options; this can

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<sup>7</sup> In case of disagreement at any point in the process, we have agreed to use our [making a complaint about social care procedure](#)

include requesting a Pathway Plan review, if a care experienced young person's tenancy is at risk.

The Homelessness Reduction Act came into force on 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

Where possible, best practice would be to make a referral well in advance of the 56 days of a care experienced young person's 18th birthday. Discussions at this point will need to cover what work has been undertaken to date to secure accommodation and why this has not been successful. Temporary accommodation provided by Homelessness Service Teams should be a last resort for care experienced young people, who ideally will be supported to move from care into a tenancy, with the key skills they need to live independently and support to build on their strengths.

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."<sup>8</sup>

In Westmorland and Furness this means that:

- For young people aged 16 and 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 an Early Help or 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 Early Help or Pathway Plan.

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<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, April 2018: 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.

## Local connection

The definition of a 'local connection' for young people leaving care was amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act so that a care experienced young person has a local connection to the area of the local authority that looked after them (young people for whom Westmorland and Furness Council is the corporate parent, can have a local connection to any of the three former districts – Barrow, Eden, South Lakes).

Following on from Local Government Reorganisation, it has been agreed that all care experienced young people will retain a local connection to the whole of Cumbria. This means that when the First Contact Script is being completed, it would be useful to clarify where the young person wishes to secure accommodation.

A First Contact Script or homeless application should be completed by the area to which the young person presents and submitted as normal. If this needs to be shared with Cumberland or other housing locality teams, this will be done by the professional to whom the young person presents, to ensure that the young person is not required to repeat their story/have to complete two forms.

Additional provision is made for care experienced young people who have been placed in accommodation, under section 22A of the Children Act 1989, in a different locality to that of the children's services authority that owes them leaving care duties. If they have lived in the other locality for at least 2 years, including some time before they turned 16 years, they will also have a local connection with that locality until they are 21 years.

In relation to care experienced young people, for whom Westmorland and Furness Council is their corporate parent, efforts should be made (prior to Gateway Group discussions) to identify the localities where the young person wishes to live, so that all Housing Options representatives can be involved in the Gateway Group discussions.

## 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 District Housing Authority when one of its service users may be homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days and if they consent 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. The list of public authorities the Duty falls, includes:

- Prison (public and private)
- youth offender institutes
- secure training centres
- secure colleges
- youth offending teams

- Probation Service
- Jobcentre Plus
- accident and emergency services provided by hospitals
- urgent treatment centres
- hospitals in their capacity of providing in-patient treatment
- social services authorities.

### Information about homelessness and sleeping rough (including referrals) in the Westmorland and Furness area.

If a care experienced young person has nowhere to stay, they may be eligible to be provided with emergency accommodation, however this will depend on their personal circumstances. The Homelessness Team does not have a duty to provide emergency accommodation to everyone who is homeless the young person's social worker or PA will need to contact the Homelessness Service Team for an assessment of whether they meet the criteria for accommodation to be provided.

If it is not possible to prevent the care experienced young person from becoming homeless, they may wish to make a full homeless application. There are five tests that the law requires all Local Authorities to apply to a homeless application in order to determine what duty, if any, may be owed to them:

- Are they eligible for assistance?
- Are they actually homeless, or are going to be within the next 28-56 days?
- Do they have a priority need for accommodation?
- Are they intentionally homeless?
- Do they have a local connection to the Westmorland and Furness area?

### Emergency accommodation: homelessness service

The Homelessness Service has Officers based in Barrow, Kendal and Penrith. Officers will arrange an initial assessment for those facing homelessness. The aim will always be to prevent homelessness wherever possible, if this is not possible and a person becomes 'roofless' then Officers aim to offer temporary accommodation for eligible applicants whilst more permanent accommodation is found through registered providers, private landlords or supported accommodation. Temporary accommodation is available in limited locations and is in high demand. Suitability is considered in line with the Homelessness Code of Guidance.

#### **Contact details are as follows:**

**Barrow:** 01229 876599 (office hours) and 01229 833311 (out of hours)  
[dutytorefer1@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk](mailto:dutytorefer1@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk)

**Eden:** 01768 861499 (office hours) and 0800 0614232 (out of hours)

[dutytorefer2@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk](mailto:dutytorefer2@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk)

Please note that these telephone numbers will change as of 1 April 2025 due to the insourcing of the service currently delivered via Eden Housing Association.

**South Lakeland:** 01539 793199 (office hours) and 01229 833311 (out of hours)

[dutytorefer3@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk](mailto:dutytorefer3@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk)

## Emergency accommodation: Nightstop

Nightstop is a Children Service's commissioned scheme to deliver emergency housing. Nightstop uses trained volunteer hosts to provide overnight accommodation in their own homes.

Nightstop can:

- be used to provide some respite for a young person while some family support is put in place to enable a return home
- place some young people with a criminal record, history of substance misuse or previous aggressive behaviour. They do the risk assessment on an individual, case-by-case basis and will look into the young person's current situation, the circumstances around any past incidents, any possible triggers and other relevant information prior to them being placed in a host's home. If any identified risks can be managed, and the young person can safely abstain from using any substances while they are with Nightstop, then they will still look to offer them a place
- support with travel arrangements. Hosts are often happy to collect young people from the train station or bus stop, or an agreed halfway point that the young person can get to. Sometimes they may have volunteer drivers available to assist with transport
- offer a young person their own room, access to washing facilities such as shower, washing machine, an evening meal, breakfast the following morning
- prioritise a young person who is already using Nightstop, for a placement the following night, if they or the referral agency contact them before midday the following day
- place a young person without a local connection to a specific area.

### Contact

0191 253 6164

[nightstopcumbria@depaulcharity.org.uk](mailto:nightstopcumbria@depaulcharity.org.uk)

In cases of immediate homelessness, and to refer to Nightstop, please [complete a First Contact Script](#).



## Accommodation options: Westmorland and Furness

### Accommodation Reality Check

Support to identify appropriate accommodation options can be sought from:

Name	Role	Contact Details
Denise Moore	Service Manager: Safeguarding Hub, Youth Homeless and Housing and EDT	<a href="mailto:Denise.moore@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk">Denise.moore@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk</a>
Emma Dutton	Youth Homeless and Housing Team Manager	07983 390683 <a href="mailto:Emma.dutton@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk">Emma.dutton@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk</a>
Emmie Sutherland	Senior Youth Homeless and Housing Officer	07825 313726 <a href="mailto:Emmie.sutherland@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk">Emmie.sutherland@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk</a>
Megan Walker	Youth Homeless and Housing Officer	07386 658909 <a href="mailto:Megan.walker@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk">Megan.walker@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk</a>
Katie Duncanson	Senior Advice Officer, Housing Options, Barrow	01229 876458 <a href="mailto:Katie.duncanson@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk">Katie.duncanson@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk</a>
Nicola Dixon	Senior Housing Options Adviser, South Lakeland	01539 793159 <a href="mailto:Nicola.dixon@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk">Nicola.dixon@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk</a>
Emma Harrison	(Housing Options Manager, Eden Housing Association)	01768 861499 <a href="mailto:emma.harrison@edenha.org.uk">emma.harrison@edenha.org.uk</a>

Any move is best done in a planned way and discussions around accommodation can begin as early as when the young person is aged 15 or 16 years old as part of their pathway planning, even if the young person does not plan to move on immediately.

**For further information around young people' housing options in Westmorland and Furness and living independently, please contact a Youth Homeless and Housing Officer.**

### Supported accommodation option: young people (16-24 years)

#### Homestays

Homestays is a Cumbria County-wide service ran alongside Cumbria Fostering even though they are hosted by Cumberland they cover Westmorland and Furness and Cumberland Councils.

It is a supported lodgings scheme primarily for young people who were looked after. The providers are assessed Homestay carers. Young people are offered a room within the provider's home, with support to enable them to develop independent living skills. Providers may also be referred to as landlords.

The plan would link with the accommodation section of the young person's pathway plan and be regularly reviewed. The aim is to bridge the gap between foster or residential care through to living independently in a successful way. Homestays may also be able to offer some time limited support to young people in transition to their new accommodation.

### **Contact details:**

[Iain.Jamieson@cumberland.gov.uk](mailto:Iain.Jamieson@cumberland.gov.uk) and 07876 577094

[Angela.owens@cumberland.gov.uk](mailto:Angela.owens@cumberland.gov.uk) and 07881 002630

[Kamila.Sosnowy-Trzeciak@cumberland.gov.uk](mailto:Kamila.Sosnowy-Trzeciak@cumberland.gov.uk) and 07876 035807

The requests from the service can be completed by social workers or Care Experienced Team workers through LCS.

## **Young people's supported accommodation**

The providers of supported accommodation through the Positive Housing Pathway for young people in Westmorland and Furness are Project John and Riverside:

- Project John (Barrow) with 14 units
- Eden Rural Foyer (Penrith) with 5 units
- South Lakes Foyer (Kendal) with 10 units.

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

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

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 shifting that young person from a point of crisis, to give them hope for the future.

For 16–17-year-olds, the referral process requires completion of the First Contact Script with the consent element signed.

For young people aged 18+, the referral process requires completion of the First Contact Script with the consent element signed.

[First Contact Script online form and information.](#)

Priority will be given to:

- young people for whom Westmorland and Furness Council has a statutory duty (16 and 17-year-olds, who are homeless or threatened with homelessness)
- young people for whom Westmorland and Furness 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.

All referrals into the Positive Housing Pathway will be discussed by a multi-agency Gateway Group. If the young person is wanting to explore supported accommodation, a Getting to Know You conversation will be held; these are done using a Signs of Wellbeing approach and adopt a strengths-based approach to discussions.

Acceptances are dependent on voids, appropriateness of the referral/strengths with which the young person presents plus the needs of other residents, as determined by the individual project/scheme.

# Young person ready to move on to independent living

## Accommodation options (young people 18 years+)

### Riverside

Riverside offer short term supported accommodation for young people aged 16 – 24 years, with a total number of 10 beds in South Lakes Foyer (Kendal) and 5 beds in Eden Rural Foyer (Penrith). All referrals need to be submitted via a First Contact Script and discussed at the Positive Housing Pathway Gateway Group meeting.

[First Contact Script online form and information](#)

### Project John

Project John offer short term supported accommodation for young people aged 16 – 24 years, with a total number of 14 units in Barrow in Furness. All referrals need to be submitted via a First Contact Script and discussed at the Positive Housing Pathway Gateway Group meeting.

[First Contact Script online form and information](#)

### Key 2 Succeed

This is affordable accommodation for 18 to 25-year-olds who may be moving on from supported accommodation, those who are studying at college/university or for those who are in work and don't require support.

Although this accommodation is not supported, tenants are required to undertake a tenancy programme and a mentor will be available.

Key 2 Succeed operates in Kendal and Penrith. In Penrith there are 9 single occupancy bedrooms, across 3 flats. All bedrooms are lockable and are ensuite. In Kendal there is one 2-bed flat with sharing facilities and lockable bedrooms.

**Contact:** [dianejukes@riverside.org.uk](mailto:dianejukes@riverside.org.uk)

### Cumbria Choice-Based Letting Scheme

[Cumbria Choice-Based Letting Scheme](#) (Cumbria CBL) offers a range of social rented properties from housing associations. This can be accessed through an online bidding system, for young people aged 18 years+.

Available properties are advertised on the CBL website; young people need to register on the website and have their application activated before they are able to bid on properties. Bids are prioritised based on bands A – C in line with Cumbria Choice policy.

Band A is classed as “Urgent Housing Need to Move.” Care experienced young people are eligible to go into Band A (on confirmation of their eligibility and their readiness to live independently and tenancy skills).

Offers for properties are made to applicants in order of their banding (so if no-one in Band A or B applies for a property, the property could be offered as a first choice to an applicant in Band C).

## Private rented sector

### Barrow Locality

There are many private rented landlords in the Barrow area. These can be viewed as adverts in the local press, estate agents, local business window adverts, or Barrow Housing Options also hold a list.

#### [Private landlord directory for the Barrow area](#)

If a young person wants to privately rent a flat, it is worth doing a budgeting exercise with them to ensure that they can afford the rent as additional bills such as Council Tax, electricity, gas and water will also be payable. Otherwise, a tenancy in a shared property may be more affordable.

### Eden Locality

Nearly all of Eden's privately rented housing is owned by individual landlords who advertise vacancies in the local press. Some estate agents also keep lists of privately rented accommodation.

It is also worthwhile looking at the advertisement postcard displays in the shops in the area where the young person wants to live, especially newsagents and convenience stores.

Adverts can often be found on internet sites such as Gumtree or social media e.g. Facebook. Alternatively young people can place an ad to say they are looking for a certain type of accommodation however checks will need to be carried out to ensure this is appropriate accommodation.

If a young person wishes to privately rent a flat, it is worth doing a budgeting exercise to ensure that they can afford the rent as additional bills such as Council Tax, electricity, gas and water will also be payable.

## **South Lakes Locality**

There are many private rented landlords in the South Lakeland area. These can be viewed as adverts in the local press, estate agents, local business window adverts, or South Lakeland Housing Options also hold a list.

### [Where to find private rented homes in the South Lakeland area](#)

If a young person wants to privately rent a flat, it is worth doing a budgeting exercise with them to ensure that they can afford the rent as additional bills such as Council Tax, electricity, gas and water will also be payable. Otherwise, a tenancy in a shared property may be more affordable.

## What does it mean to have a local connection?

The definition of a 'local connection' for young people leaving care was amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act so that a care experienced young person has a local connection to the area of the local authority that looked after them (young people for whom Westmorland and Furness Council is the corporate parent, can have a local connection to any of the 3 localities – Barrow, Eden, South Lakes).

Following on from Local Government Reorganisation, it has been agreed that all care experienced young people will retain a local connection to the whole of Cumbria. This means that when the First Contact Script is being completed, it would be useful to clarify where the young person wishes to secure accommodation.

A First Contact Script or homeless application should be completed by the area to which the young person presents and submitted as normal. If this needs to be shared with Westmorland and Furness or other housing locality teams, this will be done by the relevant professional to whom the young person presents, to ensure that the young person is not required to repeat their story/have to complete 2 forms.

Additional provision is made for care experienced young people who have been placed in accommodation, under section 22A of the Children Act 1989, in a different locality to that of the children's services authority that owes them leaving care duties.

If they have lived in the other locality for at least 2 years, including some time before they turned 16 years, they will also have a local connection with that locality until they are 21 years.

In relation to care experienced young people, for whom Westmorland and Furness Council is their corporate parent, efforts should be made (prior to Gateway Group discussions) to identify the localities where the young person wishes to live, so that all Homelessness Service representatives can be involved in the Gateway Group discussions.

Local connection is about someone's links with an area. A care experienced young person can have a local connection with a local council's area if they fall into one of the following categories.

- **They live in the area:** if they have lived in the area for six months out of the past 12, or three years out of the past five, they have a local connection. They will not qualify if they have only lived in an area because they have been in a prison or a hospital there. But they do have a local connection if they were posted there by the armed forces.
- **They have close family in the area:** they have close family, who have lived in the area for at least five years. Close family is limited to their mother, father, siblings or grown-up children. They won't have a local connection with an area any dependent children live in, if this is different to where they live. They may also have a local

connection if they were brought up in the area by a different family member such as an aunt, uncle or grandparent.

- **They work in the area:** their employment doesn't have to be full-time; part-time work counts. Self-employed people can have a local connection if they mainly work in the council's area.



# Appendix 1: Role of a Social Worker and Pathways Advisor

## Role of Social Worker and Pathway Advisor (PA) for an 'Eligible' young person (aged 16-18)<sup>9</sup>

The social worker is responsible for preparing and ensuring a young person's pathway plan is reviewed at least every six months, or when a significant change takes place (for example if they move accommodation). This review will be referred to as a Children Looked After Review (CLA). If the young person is in supported housing accommodation, the housing provider should be invited to this review.

The local authority, represented by the social worker are responsible for where the young person is living and for associated costs (there are cases where Health and/or Education are also involved in decisions around where a young person lives and associated costs but this will all be clear in the Pathway Plan).

The Pathway Advisors' (PAs) role is to support the young person to have their views heard and taken account of, to advise the young person on their options and help them to understand the processes and responsibilities involved in moving toward independence. A PA will always listen to a young person's views, but this does not mean they will promote them, if they are unrealistic or dangerous.

Between the ages of 16-18 years, the PA will assume a greater 'hands on' role with the young person, for example accompanying them to housing appointments, helping them complete CBL forms etc. The PA works alongside the social worker, in alignment with a Pathway Plan that has been agreed with the young person and by the Local Authority. Where a young person has disagreements these will be clearly documented in the plan, for example if the social worker and the PA agree the young person lacks the skills and maturity to have their own tenancy at 18 years but the young person thinks they do, this will be documented in the plan.

The young person is entitled to have a named PA, who will see them at least every three months. Their social worker will continue to also see them regularly, between 6 weekly and 3 monthly, depending if their placement is seen as 'long term' and stable.

The social worker holds case responsibility for this young person so it is important they are kept informed, but the PA is the person most likely to take forward any accommodation plans for young people moving into semi or independent living.

This young person is entitled to a Setting Up Home Allowance from Westmorland and Furness Council of up to £2205.<sup>10</sup> Unless there is good reason, this is not usually used

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<sup>9</sup> The terms 'Eligible', 'Relevant', 'Former Relevant' and 'Qualifying' are all legally defined in the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

<sup>10</sup> [Information about financial support for care leavers' accommodation](#)

before aged 18 years but any purchases being considered need to be agreed in advance with the PA and have the approval of the relevant Team Manager.

## Role of a Pathway Advisor (PA) for 'Relevant' young people (aged 16-18) but no longer looked after (no social worker)<sup>11</sup>

The PA is responsible for preparing and ensuring a young person's pathway plan is reviewed at least every six months, or when a significant change takes place, for example if they move accommodation. This review will be referred to as a Pathway Plan Review (PPR). Housing providers would often be invited to this review if the young person is in supported accommodation.

For 'Relevant' young people the young person and the PA are the point of contact.

The responsibility for associated housing costs for a young person aged under 18 years, sits with the responsible local authority.

The PA holds case responsibility for this young person and needs to be kept informed of any housing related issues for this young person.

This young person is entitled to a Setting Up Home Allowance from Westmorland and Furness Council; they will work with their PA on how and when this is spent.<sup>12</sup> Any purchases need to be agreed in advance with the PA and have the approval of the relevant Team Manager.

## Role of a Pathway Advisor (PA) for 'Former Relevant' young people (aged 18-21)<sup>13</sup>

The PA is responsible for preparing and ensuring a young person's pathway plan is reviewed at least every six months, or when a significant change takes place for example if they move accommodation. This review will be referred to as a Pathway Plan Review (PPR). Housing providers would often be invited to this review if the young person is in supported accommodation and the young person wishes for them to attend.

For 'Former Relevant' young people the young person and the PA are the point of contact, consent to share information needs to be in place as this young person is an adult. The young person can withdraw consent to share information with the PA any point.

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<sup>11</sup> The terms 'Eligible', 'Relevant', 'Former Relevant' and 'Qualifying' are all legally defined in the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

<sup>12</sup> [Information about financial support for care leavers' accommodation](#)

<sup>13</sup> The terms 'Eligible', 'Relevant', 'Former Relevant' and 'Qualifying' are all legally defined in the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

The responsibility for associated housing costs for a young person aged 18+years sits with the young person, often with financial support from the Benefits Agency (e.g. through Universal Credit).

The PA holds case responsibility for this young person and needs to be kept informed of any issues relating to housing for this young person, dependent on the young person having given consent.

This young person is entitled to a Setting Up Home Allowance from Westmorland and Furness Council; they will work with their PA on how and when this is spent.<sup>14</sup> Any purchases need to be agreed in advance with the PA and have the approval of the relevant Team Manager.

### Role of Local Authority in relation to 'Qualifying' young people<sup>15</sup>

These young people are entitled to advice and assistance, which can include financial assistance; this is at the discretion of the relevant Team Manager.

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<sup>14</sup> [Information about financial support for care leavers' accommodation](#)

<sup>15</sup> The terms 'Eligible', 'Relevant', 'Former Relevant' and 'Qualifying' are all legally defined in the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

## Appendix 2: Registration of Applicant for Care Experienced Young People Priority Band A

This form must be completed for all care experienced young people, when registering for Cumbria Choice Based Lettings. The form should be completed when the applicant first registers for CBL, regardless of whether they intend to start bidding straight away.

Name of applicant	
Date of birth	
Address	
Telephone number	
Applicant's immigration status	
Applicant's legal status	Relevant/eligible (aged under 18 years) Former relevant/eligible (aged 18+ years)
Applicant's legal status	
Have you completed an on-line CBL registration form? <i>If no, please complete before submitting this form</i>	YES    NO
Housing registration number	
Name of Pathway Advisor (PA)	
PA's mobile telephone number	
PA's email	
Form completed by	
Date	

As outlined in the Westmorland and Furness Care Experienced Young People's Protocol, please send confirmation of the applicant's eligibility for Band A to the named PA.

### Consent Statement

I do / do not consent for my PA to be contacted regarding my housing registration and application. I understand that my consent can be withdrawn at any time by contacting the housing provider dealing with my registration.

Signed:

Print name:

Date:

## Appendix 3: Care experienced young people’s priority band A activation form

This form should be used to activate the priority for a care experienced housing applicant, who is already registered through Choice Based Lettings and is ready to start bidding for properties (care leaver aged 17+ years).

<b>Name of applicant</b>	
<b>Date of birth</b>	
<b>Correspondence address for applicant</b>	
<b>Telephone number for applicant</b>	
<b>Email address for applicant</b>	
<b>Housing registration number</b>	
<b>Name of Pathway Advisor (PA)</b>	
<b>Telephone number for PA</b>	
<b>Email address for PA</b>	
<b><u>Consent statement</u></b>  <b>Signed:</b>  <b>Print name:</b>  <b>Dated:</b>	I do / do not consent for my PA to be contacted regarding my housing application and any ongoing bids

<b>How can the applicant demonstrate they are ready to live independently? (For example, have they completed any pre tenancy training? Have they completed any Westmorland and Furness Council Digital Badges on Independent Living, if so please list which)</b>	
<b>Risk assessment/evidence to show ready to move on</b>	
<b>Please outline any risks/needs associated with the applicant moving on to an independent tenancy</b>	

<b>Risk/evidence</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Please give relevant details</b>
<b>Harm to others</b>  e.g. risk to child, violence to family, staff, friends or general public, sexual assault or arson.		
<b>Harm from others</b>  e.g. risk of physical, sexual, emotional or financial abuse, gang affiliation.		
<b>Communication issues</b>  e.g. literacy skills, preferred language or form of communication.		
<b>Support plan attached – YES/NO</b>  If no, please give reason  (Please note the applicant must give consent for their plan to be shared and only relevant sections of the plan would be shared).		

<b>Has there been a change in the immigration status of the applicant?</b>	 If yes, please include Home Office documents
<b>Does the applicant have rent arrears?</b>	If yes, balance £  Is the client making a regular pattern of repayment? Yes/No
<b>Any other relevant information/changes in the applicant's circumstances</b>	
<b>Form completed by</b>	
<b>Date</b>	

## Appendix 4: Young people's Positive Housing Pathway: an overview

### Context

In 2019, Cumbria County Council undertook a service review of their commissioned supported accommodation services for young people. They also looked at models of national best practice and choose to adopt a Positive Housing Pathway model as devised by St Basil's.

From 1st April 2020, the Council's service response to young people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness was delivered through their Positive Housing Pathway model.

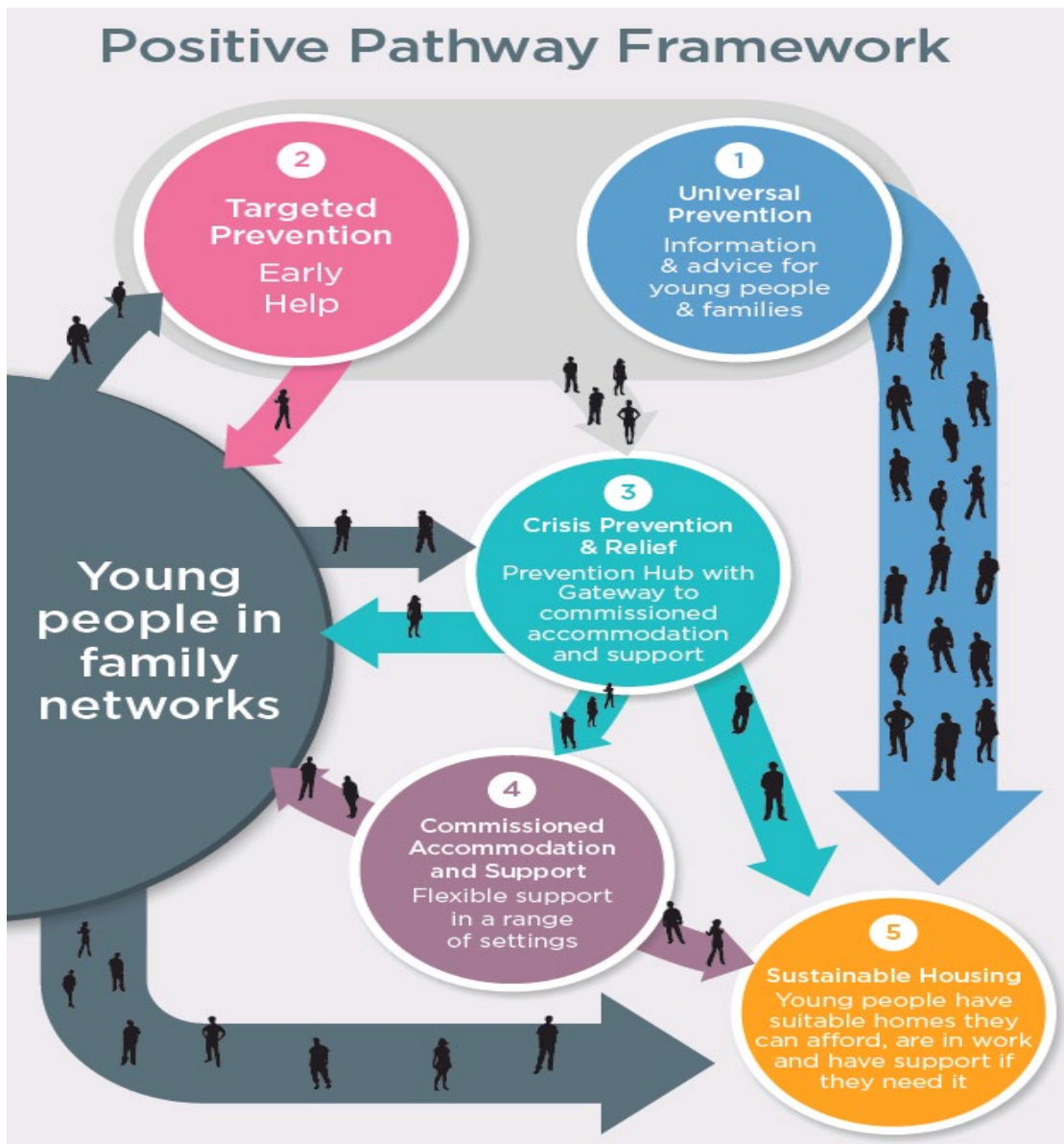
In April 2023, Cumbria County Council disaggregated and joined forces with the three former District Councils in Barrow, Eden and South Lakeland to create a unitary authority. At the point the two new Councils were formed, an agreement for a joint delivery arrangement for Youth Homeless and Housing services was in place during a transitional period.

In October 2023, the Westmorland and Furness Youth Homeless and Housing Team was officially launched. We have continued to work in partnership with Riverside, Project John and Nightstop to form our re-established Positive Housing Pathway.

The purpose of this leaflet is to clarify the service offer at the different stages of this model.



# Positive Housing Pathway Framework



## 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 risk 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/at risk of 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 will be given to:

- young people for whom Westmorland and Furness Council has a statutory duty (16-17 year olds threatened with homelessness)
- young people for whom Westmorland and Furness Council has a statutory duty (formerly cared for children)
- 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
- 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 16-24 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.

[First Contact Script online forms and information.](#)

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 your local Youth Homelessness and Housing Officer (contact details on page 39).

## 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.

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.

## 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.

#### 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 partners 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.

# Westmorland and Furness Council Youth Homeless and Housing Officer's contact details

## **Senior Youth Homeless and Housing Officer**

Emmie Sutherland

Contact number: 07825 313726

Email: [emmie.sutherland@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk](mailto:emmie.sutherland@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk)

## **Youth Homeless and Housing Officer**

Megan Walker

Contact number: 07386 658909

Email: [megan.walker@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk](mailto:megan.walker@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk)

Website: [Youth homelessness | Westmorland and Furness Council](#)