

**Title of Report:** Joint Protocol for 16 and 17 year olds who are homeless or threatened with homelessness in Gateshead

**Report of Lisa Wood – Practice Lead – Innovation, Transformation & Vulnerable adolescents**

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## **Purpose of the report**

1. To share the joint working protocol is between Housing Services and Children's Social Care. It outlines the action to be taken where a young person aged 16/17 approaches either Housing Services or Children Social Care and are homeless or threatened with homelessness and to give an update on progress to date.

## **Background**

2. Following the Homelessness Review and subsequent approval of our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy in January 2022, the Homelessness and Allocations CORE Project Team were tasked with the development of joint working protocols for 16-17 year olds and care leavers who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and ensure compliance with relevant accommodation-related guidance.
3. The requirement for this document is set out as an action within the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy:

### **Aim1: Make homelessness a rare occurrence (prevention)**

This strategic aim is about early intervention to prevent homelessness and make this event a rare occurrence.

- Action Point 9. Develop youth homelessness joint protocols for 16-17 year-olds and care leavers and ensure compliance with relevant accommodation-related guidance.
4. The Department of Education and Department of Levelling Up, Communities and Housing (DLUCH), produced a statutory guidance document for both Children's Services and Housing Services covering how both services should work collaboratively to support and accommodate 16-17 year olds who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
  5. The ['Provision of accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds who may be homeless and or require accommodation'](#) mainly outlines that where a 16-17 year old is owed duties under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989, this takes precedence over the duties in the Housing Act 1996. However, Housing Services also have duties towards young people who are homeless or threatened with homeless, and duties owed by each service will depend on a range of factors, therefore it is essential that children's services and housing

services work together. The guidance states it is good practice for an assessment of the young person's needs to be conducted jointly by both children and housing services, so young people do not have to repeat their stories each time and navigate between agencies.

6. The Young Persons Working Group, which feeds and reports into the Homelessness & Allocations CORE Project Team, worked collaboratively to develop and agree the protocol document. The Young Person's working group is a cross council group with membership from both Housing, Social Care and Commissioning.
7. The Young Persons Working Group reviewed the government guidance along with pre-existing work and processes being followed and carried out by Housing Services and the Young Persons Homeless Prevention Worker (YPHPW). The role of YPHPW is jointly funded by both Housing Services and Children's Social Care and sits within Assessment and Intervention Team, Children's Social Care.

### **The Joint Protocol for 16 and 17-year-olds who are homeless or threatened with homelessness in Gateshead**

8. The protocol which is attached in appendix 1, has been shared for comment and feedback to both the Homeless and Allocations CORE Project Team and Children's SMT. In brief the protocol sets out that:
  - Children's Social Care and Housing Services have agreed to adopt a one front door approach which aims to ensure that there is a consistent approach to all 16- and 17-year-olds who seek help from the Council who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. All these children will be referred to the Integrated Referral Team (IRT), Assessment and Intervention, Children's Social Care.
  - If the young person is homeless or at risk of homelessness, a Children and Family assessment will be offered to the young person to find out whether the young person may have any other additional needs that would warrant Children's Social Care intervention and assistance under the Child in Need framework other than housing.
  - The allocated Social Worker will co work with the YPHPW jointly assessing what support is required. The key aim is to avoid homelessness and allow young people to remain in the family home where possible, as this will be in the long-term best interests of most young people.
  - A mosaic contact record (Children's Social Care system) will be created for every young person that is assessed and deemed homeless or threatened with homelessness, which details the concerns regarding the young person.
  - The YPHPW will also create, log and maintain details of each case on NEC (Housing Services system) in line with HCLIC specification and within the parameters of the homelessness framework.

- If the young person does not wish to become a child in our care, and/or refuses a Children and Families Assessment, and accommodation is required, the YPHPW will determine which Duty is owed to the young person. They will explain to the young person and identify, all suitable accommodation options available, including the Housing Services, Supported Accommodation & Independent Living Service pathway and process (SAILS), which is specifically for Young People under 25 years old.
- The Protocol will be reviewed annually and when changes in legislation determine by both Children's Social Care and Housing Services. The protocol will also be reviewed following the Housing Improvement Programme and development of the Gateway Model. Shared key performance measures need to be developed which will be reviewed and revised over time.

### **Review of the response to 16/17 homelessness in Childrens Services**

- 9 A review was undertaken in May 2023 of the role of the Young Peoples Homeless Prevention Worker. As the response to young people on the edge of homelessness is similar to those on the edge of care, it was agreed that the Young Peoples Homeless Prevention Worker would move from the assessment & Intervention Team and operate within the Contextual Safeguarding team alongside the edge of care advocates. This will ensure a consistent response to young people and their families for young people and provide resilience to cover the role when the Young Peoples Housing Prevention Worker is on leave, or responding to another young person etc.
- 10 The Review highlighted a need for consistent practice when young people require a social worker as part of the prevention of homelessness and to assess the holistic needs of 16/17 year olds who need to be considered as children in need.
- 11 Sometimes young people who with intensive support/mediation can not remain with their families and this can trigger the duty under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989. A 16 or 17 year old child in need who, having been fully advised of the implications and having the capacity to reach a decision, has decided that they do not want to be accommodated under section 20. Therefore, the remit of the Contextual safeguarding team has been expanded to include this criteria and to respond to the needs of this group of young people.
- 12 The Contextual Safeguarding Management Team will provide management oversight of both the support to prevent 16/17 homelessness and the statutory social care response when a young person is on the edge of homelessness or prevents as homeless. The Management Team will also represent Childrens Social Care at the Young Peoples Supported Living Panel and Housing development Groups. Foster good working relationships with key officers in Housing to provide a joint approach, gather performance data and ensure all young people are recorded and outcomes measured and reviewed.

### **Performance and Impact - Q1 Apr – Jun 23**

An agreed data set has been agreed by senior managers within Housing and Childrens Social Care – information from Q1 has been sourced from case recordings and does not include all consultations or advice, support for those young people who w


- 11 ere not deemed as threatened homeless within 56 days of the referral. This will be included in future performance reports.

No. of YP's on the edge of homelessness	4
No. of YP's presenting as homeless	2

No. of YP's supported to remain with family/network	4
Housed in Eslington - Supported living assessment accomodation	2
YP's entered care	2

12 Members are asked to

- Note the contents of the report
- Note the progress and performance in quarter 1

Appendix 1 – Joint Protocol 16/17 yr old homeless	 <p>FINAL Joint Protocol for 16_17 year old H_</p>
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**Consultees:**

The following officers have been consulted on the preparation of this report:

Suzanne Storey, Practice Lead, Assessment & Intervention, Children's Social Care  
Lynn Ritchie, Housing Solutions Service Manager, Housing Services