

Care Leavers Housing Panel – Procedure & Protocol **Revised and updated April 2014**

1.0 Aims

1.1 The Care Leavers Housing Panel (CLH Panel) was set up to facilitate joint working between Children's Services and Housing Options in order to address the accommodation needs of Care Leavers who are ready to transition into independent living and subsequently leave the support of the Care Leavers Team post 21, unless in higher or full-time education.

1.2 The CLH Panel aims to ensure that Care Leavers are not made homeless during this transition. The CLH Panel recognises that is not appropriate for Care Leavers to present to the Council as homeless as a way of obtaining accommodation, because the Council is committed to preventing and reducing homelessness wherever possible. Although there is provision within the Housing Act for some homeless Care Leavers, the CLH Panel recognises the detrimental effect of homelessness and that, because of their background, this would be particularly harmful to the long term outcomes of Care Leavers.

2.0 Function

2.1 The CLH Panel is chaired by Children's Services and members consist of appropriate representatives from both Children's Services and Housing Options. The allocated Social Care Worker will be required to attend the CLH Panel on behalf of the care leaver to present the case.

2.2 The CLH Panel may invite other appropriate workers to the meeting if it will be helpful to the decision making process.

2.3 The CLH Panel meets every 6 weeks, effective April 2014. A list of meeting dates for the year will be available from the Tri-Borough Panels Team.

2.4 The main function of the CLH Panel is to recommend an appropriate accommodation option for the care leaver. The panel uses an assessment framework on the Care Leavers Housing Panel Decision Sheet (Appendix 1) to consider the eligibility, support needs and independent living skills of Care Leavers so that it can reach a recommendation.

2.5 Where appropriate, the CLH Panel will make recommendations as to any support packages needed to ensure a successful transition from care into independent living.

2.6 There are two frameworks through which the CLH Panel operates:

i. The Children and Young Person's Act, 2008. This Act states that when a young person leaves care it may not be possible for them to return to the care of their family; they may have none, or they may be estranged. The Council has a duty to meet the needs of:

Former relevant children aged 18+ where the local authority is required to assist them to the extent that their welfare requires it (Section 23C (4));

The CLH Panel will have regard to this statutory duty when considering referrals.

ii. If the CLH Panel recommends social housing, members must also assess whether

the Care Leaver meets the qualification criteria for social housing as set out in the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme (April 2013). A copy of the scheme can be found on the Council's website.

3.0 Housing Options for Care Leavers

There is a high demand but a shortage of supply for all types of housing, in particular within Hammersmith & Fulham and neighbouring boroughs. The CLH Panel recognises this and so must be realistic when considering referrals. A range of housing options to which the CLH Panel can recommend is set out in Appendix 2.

4.0 Criteria for referral to the CLH Panel

In order to be considered for any accommodation option by the CLH Panel, Care Leavers must:

- Be 18 years old or over
- Have valid proof of ID with appropriate leave to remain
- Have the means to pay their rent and sustain themselves financially (benefits, employment, student loan)
- Have the necessary skills to live independently and to care for themselves.
- Show that they are/can be a good tenant, can care for their flat, respect neighbours and keep noise to reasonable and acceptable level
- Show a proven track record in managing own finances. This includes managing rent, bills and other expenses, without incurring high levels of debt or arrears. Where there are/have been arrears there must be evidence of repayment plans being carried out
- Be able and willing to use any support package provided
- Not have access to any other accommodation e.g. where they are already suitably housed

5.0 Referral process

5.1 Only complete referrals will be heard by the CLH Panel. A complete referral will at a minimum consist of the following documentation:

- Young Persons Nomination Form
- Updated Pathway Plan
- Proof of ID / Leave to Remain for the care leaver and any children who are part of their household
- Proof of current income / benefits
- Statement about the care leaver from the current care provider
- Current tenancy / licence agreement
- Most recent rent statement showing if there are any rent or service charge arrears
- Medical letters (if appropriate)

5.2 The Social Care Worker will submit the complete referral to their Team Manager 10 days before the CLH Panel is scheduled to meet. A list of meeting dates can be obtained from the Tri-Borough Panels Team.

5.3 The Team Manager will check the referral and if it is complete they will send it to the Tri-Borough Panels Team 5 days before the CLH Panel is scheduled to meet.

5.4 The Tri-Borough Panels Team will email all the completed referrals to the CLH Panel members approximately 1-2 days before the scheduled meeting.

6.0 Assessment process

6.1 At the CLH Panel meeting the Social Care Worker will present the case and members will read and consider all of the presented information.

6.2 After each case is heard, the members will discuss it and make a recommendation using the eligibility and assessment framework as set out on the Care Leavers Housing Panel Decision Sheet (Appendix 1).

6.3 The panel Chair will complete and sign the Care Leavers Housing Panel Decision Sheet for each case to record the outcome.

6.4 At the end of the meeting, the decision sheets will be sent to the Tri-Borough Panels Team for uploading to Framework-i and dissemination by email to all CLH Panel members.

7.0 The Care Leavers Quota (Social Housing)

7.1 Each financial year, a quota of social housing units is allocated for Care Leavers by Housing Options within its Housing Allocation Scheme. This is referred to internally as the 'Care Leavers Quota'. It is recognised by Children's Services and Housing Options that because of the shortage of social housing supply, these nominations should be targeted to the most vulnerable of Care Leavers. Vulnerability is established through panel discussion and using the assessment framework as set out in 2.3 (above).

7.2 Even if a care leaver is considered by the panel to be sufficiently vulnerable for social housing, the care leaver must also meet the qualification criteria for social housing as set out in the Housing Allocation Scheme (April 2013).

7.3 The Care Leavers Housing Panel has the discretion, by exception, to recommend people where the decision outcome does not support a social housing nomination, but the professional judgement of the CLH Panel deems social housing to be the most appropriate option. However, the CLH Panel Chair cannot override the qualification criteria for social housing as set out in the Housing Allocation Scheme. There may be cases where the panel / Chair recommends social housing but the care leaver does not qualify under the Housing Allocation Scheme. Where it is thought that the circumstances of the case are so exceptional as to override the qualification criteria, the CLH Panel chair will request that discretion be exercised by the Director of Housing Options, Skills and Economic Development. For ease, this request will be made through the Panel's Housing Representative. The Director's decision is final.

7.4 Any nomination outside of the criteria will be clearly recorded on the CLH Panel's decision sheet.

7.5 The majority of social housing units that become available are studio and 1-bedroomed properties, although where necessary nomination to a larger sized property, for example a care leaver with children, will also be considered. The size of property agreed will depend upon the household composition and any other essential housing needs as set out in the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme.

8.0 Decision - Administration

8.1 If the decision is Social Housing, the Care Leaver must complete a Housing Register Application Form (available from H&F Advice) and hand this in to **Maureen**

Reardon, Allocations Team, 1st Floor, 145 King Street, W6 9XY. Please ensure the form is clearly marked “Care Leaver” on the front.

8.2 Once received, the Care Leaver will be added to the Council’s Housing Register and made ONE direct offer of suitable accommodation. Please note that the Council no longer automatically issues secure tenancies. Care Leavers will be issued with a 5-year flexible tenancy.

8.3 The Council wants to give additional priority on its Housing Register to people in housing need who are making a ‘Community Contribution’. If the Care Leaver is engaging in work, training or education please refer to Annex 2 of the Housing Allocation Scheme (April 2013), and provide the required evidence along with the Housing Application form.

8.4 If the decision is Private Rented Sector, the Social Care Worker will liaise with the Team Manager to arrange a rent deposit and 1 months’ rent in advance. Please see Appendix 2 for more information about this option.

8.5 If the decision is HALD, the Care Leaver must hand in the last 3 months rent statements (available from their supported housing provider) to **PATHS, 1st floor, 145 King Street, W6 9XY**. PATHS will co-ordinate nominations to HALD properties. Please see Appendix 2 for more information about this option.

9.0 Suitable Accommodation:

For the purpose of the Care Leavers Housing Panel, suitable accommodation is defined as that:

- Which so far as reasonably practicable is suitable for the young person in light of their identified and assessed needs;
- Which the responsible authority has satisfied itself as to the character and suitability of the landlord or other provider;
- Which complies with Health and Safety requirements related to rented accommodation;
- In respect of which the responsible authority has so far as reasonably practicable taken into account the young person’s wishes and feelings and;
- Meets the young person’s educational, training and employment needs.

10.0 Support to Care Leavers in independent accommodation

10.1 The Social Care Worker will provide resettlement support to the Care Leaver so that their transition into independent living is as smooth as possible.

10.2 Should the Care Leaver require longer term tenancy support that falls outside of the Social Care Workers’ remit, an application for Floating Support should be made by emailing housing.support@lbhf.gov.uk requesting a referral form. Please note this service is only available to people living in LBHF.

11.0 Dispute resolution

11.1 Occasionally, disputes may occur between representatives on the CLH Panel however the Chair will have the final recommendation on the most appropriate

support and accommodation option. The CLH Panel members accept that the Chair exercises their professional judgement in the context of the case presented and the eligibility criteria and the supply of housing available.

12.0 Re-referrals to the panel

12.1 The CLH Panel recognises that even with help offered through the Social Care Worker and / or Floating Support it is likely that some young adults will not succeed in their first attempt at living independently. The Council should be prepared to respond appropriately to this situation and to allow for subsequent referrals to the panel where the young person may have failed in accommodation but who demonstrates a willingness to work in partnership with those supporting them and to engage in positive efforts to work towards independence. This will also minimise the number of Care Leavers who fail in accommodation from presenting as homeless to the Council.

12.2 The CLH Panel will re-consider referrals where a decision has been reached without the full information being initially provided or where there has been a significant change in the Care Leavers' circumstances which the Team Manager feels may change the original decision.

12.3 Any re-referrals to the panel must be under age 21 unless they are in higher or full-time education in which case they can be re-referred up until their 25th birthday.

13.0 Complaints and legal challenges

13.1 Children's Services retain responsibility for the care leaver and Chair the CLH Panel, and will therefore respond to any complaints or legal challenges regarding the panels' decision outcome or decision making process. These will be sent to the CLH Panel Chair, or in their absence, an appropriate service manager within Children's Services.

13.2 Complaints or legal challenges regarding Housing decisions concerning the provision or suitability of accommodation will be sent to the Reviews & Complex Cases Team based in Housing Options.

13.3 Where a joint response is required from Children's Services and Housing, the CLH Panel Chair will oversee replies submitted.

END

APPENDIX 1

Care Leavers Accommodation Panel Decision Sheet

Care Leavers Name	
Date of panel	
Referred by	

The housing options offered to Care Leavers aged 18+ by the Care Leavers Accommodation Panel are:

1. Social housing – 5 year flexible tenancy
2. Private rented: deposit and 1 month's rent
3. Housing Association Lettings Direct (HALD)

Please refer to the accommodation options table for more information about each housing option.

A. Eligibility Criteria

Does the care leaver meet the following?	YES	NO
Over 18 years old		
Valid proof of ID with appropriate leave to remain, copy attached?		
Have the means to pay their rent and sustain themselves financially (benefits, employment, student loan). Is proof of income / benefits attached?		
The necessary skills to live independently and to care for themselves. If ongoing support will be necessary, how will this be done?		
To show that they are/can be a good tenant, can care for their flat, respect neighbours and keep noise to reasonable and acceptable level		
To show a proven track record in managing own finances. This includes managing rent, bills and other expenses, without incurring high levels of debt or arrears. Where there are/have been arrears there must be evidence of repayment plans being carried out		
To be able and willing to use any support provided		
Not have access to any other accommodation e.g. they are already suitably housed		
If the answer to any of the above is "NO" then the referral should be rejected at this point by the panel and the appropriate eligibility advice given to the social work PA.		
Outcome:	Ready to live independently and eligible:	Not ready and/or not eligible:

B. Vulnerability assessment

This scoring process is to determine what housing option and / or support package will be recommended by the panel:

How to score:

- 0 = No need identified
- 1= Low need identified
- 2 = Medium need identified
- 3 = High need identified

Scoring:

0-6 points – consider young person for Private Rented options

6-21 points – consider young person for a social housing flexible tenancy

21+ points – consider if person is ready to live independently yet

Vulnerability assessment:	Score 0-3
Ongoing mental health/emotional issues	
Traumatic childhood/adolescence experiences that are still impacting on young person's life	
Learning difficulties	
Physical disabilities	
In EET and living on low income (<i>automatically score 3</i>)	
Young parent	
At risk of exploitation (e.g. sexual/financial) etc.	
At risk of/already offending	
History of substance misuse	
Social Isolation	
Other (please state)	
TOTAL SCORE:	
	MAX SCORE 33

For Social Housing nominees only as of 01/04/13:	Yes / No
Does the care leaver have a 5 year continuous local connection to LBHF? (include all LBHF funded placements out of borough). If not, then the young person cannot be nominated for social housing and will be referred to Private Rented Accommodation only.	
Has the care leaver been found guilty of unacceptable behaviour which makes them unsuitable to be a tenant? Please refer to Section 2.14(h) of the Housing Allocation Scheme for this definition. If yes, but there are exceptional circumstances, please refer the case via the Panel's Housing Representative to The Director of Housing Options, Skills & Economic Development for discretion.	
Does the care leaver have rent arrears?	
How much are the arrears?	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a repayment plan in place? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the arrears make any future housing unaffordable / unsustainable? 	
<p>Does the care leaver meet the Community Contribution criteria? As this may affect their priority banding. <i>Please see Annexe 2, page 35 of LBHF's Housing Allocation Scheme for the exact criteria. Evidence of Community Contribution must be provided.</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proof of offer / acceptance onto formal study or training 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In employment 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteering for min 20 hours per month 	
<p>If agreed for social housing then the pink Housing Application Form must be fully completed and handed in at 145 King Street for the application to be processed.</p>	

Panel Decision and reasons:

Signature of Panel chair:

Date:

Request for re-assessment: If a young person wishes to request a re-assessment of the Panel's decision, he/she must do so within 2 weeks of receiving the decision and must follow the procedure outlined in the attached information sheet.

**APPENDIX 2:
Housing Options for Care Leavers 2014-15**

Housing Type	What is it?	Who is it suitable for?	How is it administered?
<p>Social Housing (Care Leavers Quota)</p>	<p>A Council or Housing Association 5 year flexible tenancy.</p> <p>There is a quota of 25 social housing nominations for care leavers in 2014-15.</p> <p>Please note that secure or assured tenancies are no longer issued. Flexible tenancies may be let at market rent levels even though they are issued by social landlords.</p>	<p>Suitable for care leavers who can live independently and manage their own tenancy but who have on-going, long term vulnerabilities.</p> <p>Care leavers must also meet the qualification criteria in line with the LBHF's Housing Allocation Scheme (April 2013). A copy of the scheme is available on the Councils website.</p>	<p>Care Leaver must be agreed for a social housing nomination by the Care Leavers Panel.</p> <p>If the relevant criteria is met then the Care Leaver will be placed on the Housing Register in Band 3 and made a direct offer.</p> <p>If the care leaver meets the Community Contribution criteria in addition to the above, then they will be placed into Band 2 and made a direct offer. (See page 35 of the Housing Allocation Scheme, April 2013, for how a Community Contribution is defined).</p>
<p>Private Rented Sector (PRS) accommodation – Deposit + 1 months' rent provided by CFS</p>	<p>An Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST) with a private landlord.</p>	<p>Suitable for care leavers who have low or no support needs, are independent and capable of dealing with a private landlord directly.</p> <p>Care leavers can exercise their choice of property and area. Useful for people who have settled out of the borough.</p>	<p>Care leavers can find accommodation themselves by approaching letting agents, looking in newspapers or on the internet.</p> <p>Deposit and 1 month rent is provided by Children's Services.</p> <p>Care leavers are entitled to the self-contained 1-bedroom Housing Benefit rate until they are aged 22. After this age, they will only be entitled to the shared-room rate from ages 22-35.</p>
	<p>This is Private Rented</p>	<p>Suitable for care leavers</p>	<p>The Council has very</p>

<p>Housing Association Lease Direct (HALD)</p>	<p>Sector accommodation where the landlord has asked a Housing Association to manage the property on their behalf, commonly for 2-5 years.</p> <p>HALD's may be shared or self-contained accommodation. Rents are the same as regular PRS accommodation i.e. at market level or above. Properties are unlikely to be in H&F.</p>	<p>who can live independently but require some on-going support at a low level. The care leaver would deal with the Housing Association for any tenancy / property issues, not the landlord.</p>	<p>limited access to HALD's and PATHS oversees the allocation of HALD's. Due to lack of supply, a direct offer will be made.</p> <p>In the private sector, care leavers can only claim the 1-bedroom self-contained Housing Benefit rate until they are aged 22, but if they are in a HALD they remain entitled to this rate after age 22.</p>
<p>Further Supported Housing</p>	<p>Supported housing to address on-going medium to high support needs and continue to develop independent living skills.</p>	<p>Suitable for care leavers who are not ready to live independently because they lack the appropriate skills and have on-going medium / high support needs.</p>	<p>Children's Services commission a range of supported housing services for care leavers. The tri-borough Placements Team move people into and within Children's Services provision.</p> <p>PATHS also has a range of short-term supported housing for homeless people. Occasionally there may be a care leaver who is being discharged from care but who is not ready to live independently and requires on-going supported housing, Medium / high support needs only. Please discuss any potential PATHS referral with PATHS Manager in Housing Options before making a referral.</p>
<p>Floating Support (Family Mosaic)</p>	<p>Floating Support is housing related support to help people who live in the borough to sustain their independent tenancy.</p>	<p>Suitable for care leavers in social housing or the PRS who need short-term housing related support. Floating Support can be provided at any stage of the tenancy, not just at the beginning.</p>	<p>A direct referral can be made by Children's Services to Family Mosaic Floating Support Service as there is a quota of floating support set aside specifically for care leavers.</p>