

ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT FRAMEWORK FOR NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE CARE LEAVERS 2018-20

Summary

The importance of a secure and safe base from which to launch into adult life must not be underestimated. A secure housing base is critical to young people making progress in all areas of their lives, including education, training & employment; improved mental health, relationships & building of social networks. Research shows that young people value having choice about where they will live and being involved in decisions which affect them¹.

All care Leavers needs and experiences will be different. Some young people may secure and manage in their own accommodation at 18 but they will continue to need support as they develop their skills and learn from experience. Most 18 year olds will not be ready to successfully manage their own tenancy, even with support, and any experience of 'failure' can have a negative impact on their journey into adulthood.

Our aim is to ensure that there is a sufficient variety and choice of accommodation, training and support to meet the needs of individual Care Leavers while allowing for changes and mistakes in this challenging time of a young person's life.

For young people in care, the local authority is their corporate parent and should therefore provide for Care Leavers in the way that reasonable parents do for their own children.

We aim to help young people to build on their strengths and to learn from mistakes in a supportive environment.

The number and types of accommodation and units available is informed by our needs assessment and consultation with young people and providers. Accommodation providers include commissioned and non-commissioned services as well as friends and family.

Certain principles underpin our approach:

- Information, choice & control for young people
- Second chances
- Flexible support that adapts to meet needs
- Supportive relationships
- Shared responsibility of the Corporate Parent

Legal Framework

The legislation most relevant to care leavers' accommodation needs is the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, which imposes accommodation duties on local authorities to support certain categories of looked-after children and care leavers.

The legal framework, specific to care leavers, seeks to ensure that care leavers receive the right services to enable their transition to adulthood, including access to accommodation. There is also legislation, which is not specific to care leavers, such as general homelessness legislation, that provides a valuable safety net if a young person experiences homelessness

Introduction

Sustaining suitable accommodation is an important factor in becoming an adult. North East Lincolnshire's Support Offer includes a number of key elements:

- Preparation
- Range of accommodation options to suit individual need
- Support

Preparation

Preparation for independence and adulthood begins as soon as we start to teach a young person to do things for themselves at a very early age. Supporting children to make decisions, to manage relationships, to manage money and to have responsibility for household chores are all important stepping stones towards being an adult. Carers must always think about the long term implications of their parenting approach and consider how it will help prepare the child or young person for independence.

As the young person gets older, a range of skills will need to be developed using a variety of approaches in money management, managing a tenancy, self-care, cooking, hygiene and health to identify what a young person can already do and where further development is needed and to explore the young person's views about the options available to them. Young people will get accurate and relevant information about what will happen when they leave care, where they might live & the pros and cons of the various options in order to make an informed choice, carers will need to be involved in every step of the process.

Children's homes will have their own independence programmes which are developed in consultation with young people and their social workers.

Accommodation Options

Needs are identified at an early stage and recorded in the Pathway Plan. These should be reviewed prior to a young person becoming independent.

Some young people are suited to remaining with their foster carers for a period before moving into independent living arrangements, others need a semi-independent setting where support can be increased or reduced depending upon circumstances. The most challenging group are those Care Leavers who, for a variety of reasons, are not ready to manage independently but who reject all supported living options.

Care Leavers have the opportunity to move between different accommodation options depending upon their needs at the time.

- **Staying Put**

North East Lincolnshire Council is committed to enabling any young person in foster care to remain with their carers after the age of 18 if both they and their carers wish for this to happen.

Foster carer's will be paid a Staying Put Allowance until the young person leaves or reaches the age of 21. It is acknowledged that the period of time a young person stays put will derive from their needs and individual situation. There is an entitlement document in relation to staying put to assist young people.

- **Commissioned Supported Lodgings Scheme.**

Current providers, Humbercare are commissioned to provide supported lodgings placements for care leavers. Young people live in a private house with the lodgings provider. A contract identifies the level of support & expectations and there is a focus on preparing young people for independent living and their own tenancy. Floating support from Humbercare staff is allocated to each placement. Placements are also available for the Youth Offending Service and for Children in Need within this scheme. There are also additional hours of floating support available from Humber care to assist young people. The developed relationship between the leaving care service and Humbercare has resulted in a number of creative responses to assist young people make positive move on options.

- **The Willows project**

Three semi-independent houses have been set up as follow on accommodation to help young people in care of school leaving age, unaccompanied asylum seeking children and Care Leavers learn the skills to manage independent living. A contract is drawn up which will specify expectations of the young person and the level of support they can expect. Staff can sleep in when required or young people can begin to live without a resident adult in a move towards an independent tenancy.

- **Scott Close**

Scott Close is a training flat leased by the Local Authority from Shoreline and is available to Care Leavers to practice skills required to their own tenancy. It can be beneficial for young people who are able to manage a tenancy or for young people who struggle to live with others.

- **YMCA**

The YMCA provides hostel accommodation in Grimsby. Young people in the YMCA have a key worker and access floating support. Young people are encouraged to seek education, training or employment, participate in social activities and develop positive relationships with others. There is a discreet portion of the facility available for more vulnerable young people.

- **The Foyer Grimsby.**

The Foyer is part of the YMCA organisation. Young people are required to be engaged in education or training. The Foyer offers accommodation units with support delivered by staff with experience across a range of disciplines, trained to use a coaching approach which encourages young people to set their own goals and avoid the dependency that tends to be created through a traditional 'support work' model. The Foyer is now providing training within the facility to encourage young people back into a learning environment.

- **The Salvation Army – Booth Lifehouse**

The Salvation Army provides accommodation for single vulnerable young people aged 25 and over. Young people must be eligible to claim housing benefit and be willing to engage with support plans. This accommodation is little used by Care Leavers

- **Doorstep Supported Living: Cleethorpes.**

Doorstep has accommodation which provides single room self-catering accommodation with shared kitchen & living room. There is 24 hour waking cover, a Key Worker system, support plans with agreed outcomes and support with independent living skills and employment. They will accept young people with a history of substance misuse who are actively working towards being drug free. They also operate a crash pad facility for emergency accommodation.

- **Havelock and Longhurst Housing (Land H homes)**

In addition to being one of the local social housing providers, L and H Holmes also provide floating housing related support and have a supported shared housing programme called Stepping Stones.

Stepping Stones provide emergency accommodation with high levels of support for people who are homeless. Accommodation consists of shared houses for a maximum of 16 weeks.

- **Doorstep.**

Doorstep provides temporary supported accommodation for young single people and young parents aged 16 – 25. They are a local charitable organisation who secure properties and can support young people including care leavers.

- **Social Housing Providers**

For Care Leavers who are ready to manage their own tenancy social housing is available. The majority of social housing in North East Lincolnshire is provided by the Lincolnshire Housing Partnership. However a number of other providers exist. Applications are made through a choice based lettings housing register, where individuals are able to bid for properties of their choice advertised on the web site. Care Leavers are supported with this process. They do not automatically get priority points but vulnerability factors will be considered in individual applications when awarding points. The actual application will be web based but accessible both at central points and from any computer connected to the web.

- **White Rose Consortium**

NELC is a member of the White Rose Consortium including the post 16 framework, which gives young people access to supported accommodation in another area. This has proved beneficial where, for whatever reason, a Care Leaver feels safer living outside North East Lincolnshire.

- **Private Landlords.**

Social housing tends to be the preferred choice for Care Leavers since private landlords usually charge higher rents resulting in individuals having to pay a top up to the local housing allowance and the quality of accommodation cannot be assured. However, care leavers do access private tenancies. Where appropriate the local authority will stand as guarantor for the Care Leaver until they are 18.

- **Family and Friends**

Approximately 20% of Care Leavers reside with family or friends. Maintaining or building positive relationships while the young person is in care will increase the longevity and success of these arrangements. NELC has a Family Group Conferencing team which can be used to help families plan together, explore options and identify support needs.

- **Adult Service Provision**

A number of Care Leavers with significant and complex disabilities transition into adult services accommodation. An early alert system and close co-operation with adult services ensures that suitable accommodation and living arrangements are in place when the young person reaches 18

- **Bespoke Packages**

Certain circumstances require individual solutions tailored to the Care Leaver's particular needs. Examples include a semi-independence setting, supported by a familiar group of residential staff, to allow a young Care Leaver to explore independent living with her boyfriend in advance of the birth of her baby.

- Emergency Accommodation – Both Doorstep and YMCA offer crash pads for those occasions when relationships break down and a short term temporary option is needed whilst bridges are built and /or the next placement is found.

Accommodation Support

- **Through Care**

Through Care is the social work team which supports both looked after children and Care Leavers, thus ensuring continuity of relationships at this important time of transition. Care Leavers may retain their social Worker and all will have a Personal Adviser. The role of the PA is to support or signpost to support in all aspects of a Care Leaver's life including communicating with professional bodies, financial planning, bill paying, education, training and employment, family relationships, improving social opportunities and health matters. Care Leavers are entitled to financial support towards the cost of setting up home.

- **Staying Close Project**

This is a initiative project funded through the Department for Education looking to bridge the gap between care and independence, residential services provide floating support to young people moving into a variety of housing options. A cohort of young people is supported with an existing relationship with a person they identify.

- **Foster carers**

There are many foster carers who continue to offer emotional and practical support Care Leavers even when they have moved into new accommodation. Young people are able to come back for meals, get there washing done, seek general emotional support.

- **Home Options Team**

The Home Options is a NELC Service providing statutory homelessness, housing advice and support to promote independence and prevent or relieve homelessness. They can offer free and confidential advice on the following: Finding a Home , Preventing Homelessness , Tenancies * Relationship Breakdown * Domestic Abuse * Harassment * Illegal Evictions * Mortgage Arrears , Mediation ,Rent Arrears ,Tenancy Deposits.

- **Doorstep**

Doorstep offer housing and housing related support to 16 to 25 year olds. They have a drop in centre with sufficient space to run courses and groups and have accommodation ranging from supported lodgings, supported shared houses and supported or non-supported general housing.

- **Young Peoples Support Service**

YPSS has a wide range of targeted services that can help with a range of issues.

Access Partnership – Counselling

Career Education Information and Guidance Service –To promote financial stability through education, training and employment.

Sexual Health – Advice on relationships and all the associated sexual well-being matters

Young and Safe - Help with avoiding getting into risk based relationships and related violence, sexual abuse and drug abuse, both personal and peer groups and understanding how to manage relationships.

- **CARE (Christian Action Resource Service)**

Christian Action & Resource Enterprise is a charity located in North East Lincolnshire, dedicated to relieving poverty, hardship and distress to those in need in the local community.

Care shop – For cheap or free furniture and household goods

- **Department of Works and Pensions and Job Centre**

The DWP has a specialist advisor for Care Leavers and have a developed protocol with the Local Authority to ensure they understand the unique needs of Care Leavers and can guide young people through the system when they most need it.

- **Community Learning Service**

The Through Care Service has developed close working links with CLS. In addition to employment related training they offer learning for Life; courses that help with sustaining Accommodation and basic life skills.

Young People Leaving Custody

Young people leaving custody are particularly vulnerable and may present additional challenges in accessing housing & support, often due to disruptive behavior. Many local housing options will not admit young people who have committed offences such as arson & sexual offences.

We therefore aim to explore accommodation options as soon as possible on entering custody, while recognizing that options available will change over time. It is important that the PA keeps in touch with the young person and both understands their views and also ensures that the young person understands the options available.

Contingency plans are important in case circumstances change prior to release or the first option does not work out.

Drawing up and implementing a robust support package is vital along with the support staff in the prison environment.

Strategic Relationships

Through Care, is a member of the Operational Homelessness Forum. All agencies meet to examine accommodation issues including changes to benefit payments & monitor effectiveness of Homeless Strategy.

The service is co-located with the HomeOptions Team and Home Choice Lincs.