

Worcestershire County Council Joint Protocol for Care Leavers

From the 1st October 2019 Worcestershire County Council (WCC) will move operational delivery of social care, early help and education services into Worcestershire Children First (WCF). This is a Wholly Owned Council Company and is the alternative delivery model to deliver Children's Social Care, as directed by the Department for Education in September 2017. Worcestershire County Council will still retain all statutory duties and Worcester Children First will be responsible for all operational delivery for social care, early help and education services.

For the purpose of this document, when Worcestershire County Council is referred to it will relate to the Children, Families and Communities Directorate up to 30th September 2019. After this date it will relate to WCF for all operational functions with WCC retaining all statutory duties.

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1. Introduction

The experience of care leavers is often characterised by an accelerated and compressed transition to adulthood. Many move from a position of being a dependent child in care aged 15 to living on their own with little practical support by age 19. The impact of a disrupted childhood and this rapid process of change is that care leavers have often missed critical phases in their development; not attaining all the necessary skills to meet the challenges of adulthood. At a time when many Young People do not achieve independence until they are in their late 20's, care leavers are expected to navigate these changes before they reach 20.

In order to help children in care make a successful transition to independence we need to ensure they are supported to develop the necessary practical skills to live independently. Agencies within Worcestershire must work together to meet their statutory duties and corporate parenting responsibilities and provide a safe and supportive pathway to independent living.

It is important to remember that there is no one appropriate pathway for young people to move to independent living. Care leavers, like all young people, will make mistakes and require support to learn from their experiences. Young people leaving care may need longer to achieve some of their goals than their peers who have not been in care.

This protocol seeks to clarify the legal framework within which Worcestershire County Council and the Local Housing Authorities (LHA) operate; and how, as partner agencies, we translate our statutory duties towards care leavers into policy, procedure and practice. A key feature of this Protocol will be to promote an earlier start to the independence preparation process, effective joint planning between the CFCD and the LHAs and set out how, together; we can meet our responsibilities towards care leavers as Corporate Parents.

1.1 Context

This document updates V1.2 of the Worcestershire Joint Protocol for Care Leavers, initially written in 2017.

This revision has been initiated and undertaken by the LHAs and representatives from Worcestershire County Council via the Care Leavers Service / Post 16 working group as part of Worcestershire's Care Leaver Strategy 2017-2019.

The LHA of Worcestershire are: Bromsgrove District Council, Redditch Borough Council, Malvern Hills District Council, Worcester City Council, Wychavon District Council and Wyre Forest District Council.

Purpose of the Joint Protocol

This Joint Protocol is an agreement between the LHAs (and their agents providing the homeless/housing advice services) and Worcestershire County Council to:

- Set out our commitment to developing services (our local offer) to care leavers;
- Establish the roles and responsibilities towards care leavers and define the roles of the statutory agencies within the legislative framework;
- Develop a "corporate parenting" approach towards care leavers, providing a shared commitment from Worcestershire County Council and LHA to ensure our young people achieve the best outcomes possible;
- Identify how the Worcestershire County Council and the LHA can, by working together, meet the needs of care leavers, and effectively discharge our duties, ensuring that there are no gaps in services and that resources are effectively used; and
- Ensure all officers using this protocol are mindful of the roles and responsibilities of organisations working with young people and the need for multi-agency working to secure positive outcomes.

This Joint Protocol does not currently cover working relationships with other agencies.

1.2 What are the benefits of having the Joint Protocol?

In Worcestershire, it is recognised that there is no single body with full responsibility towards care leavers and that many organisations have a responsibility for, or a duty to, young people who are preparing for the transition to independence and leaving care.

This Joint Protocol clarifies the processes to be followed in respect of planning for, and subsequently supporting, young people's progression from looked after accommodation to independence, as well as the mechanisms for review and contingency.

It will be used as a basis for encouraging joint working and training between Worcestershire County Council and the LHA, providing impetus for collecting and analysing data which can be used to inform future strategy and commissioning activities across Worcestershire including those services aimed at early intervention and preventing homelessness.

The benefits of the Joint Protocol are:

- A clearer understanding of roles and responsibilities for officers of Worcestershire County Council and LHA;
- A partnership approach to ensuring young people needs are assessed, understood, and they are supported to access accommodation appropriate to their needs; reducing the risk of homelessness via preparation, planning and supporting sustainable transitions towards independence;
- A reduced risk of young people being passed between statutory bodies and other agencies and falling through the net and therefore becoming at risk of rough sleeping or exploitation.

Better working relationships between Worcestershire County Council and LHA should lead to:

- A higher number of young people assisted via the Positive Pathway;
- A reduction in the use of inappropriate accommodation, with the aim of reducing the use of bed and breakfast type accommodation for care leavers;
- Avoidance of the use of the homelessness route as a means of accommodation for care leavers and reduction in the number of care leavers presenting as homeless aged 18 and over;
- The most efficient and effective use of resources and time;
- Sharing of relevant data and information to aid future planning.

1.3 What are the outcomes for Young People?

By taking a multi-agency approach, the Joint Protocol aims to achieve the following outcomes for young people:

- Care leavers will be aware of their accommodation options and be actively involved in their plan;
- Planned transitions towards independence supported by accurate and up-to-date Pathway Plans;
- On-going support to ensure accommodation is sustained with a personalised support package;
- Assertive prevention of progression to accommodation breakdown allowing for planned moves to a more supportive provision if required;
- Reduced risk of homelessness and rough sleeping;

- Access to safe, secure and appropriate emergency accommodation, if accommodation arrangements do break down.

1.4 Who does the joint protocol cover?

This protocol covers young people who are care leavers, this includes young people who have ceased to be looked after, referred to in the legislation as "Relevant" and "Former Relevant" Children. In a departure from the original, and for the purpose of planning and preparation, this Protocol also covers young people who have achieved 'Eligible' Status in accordance with the Leaving Care Act 2000 (see legislative context below for explanation of entitlement and status).

This therefore includes:

- Care leavers aged 16 to 25, who have left care, or who are due to leave the care of the Local Authority;
- Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers who qualify for a leaving care service and have been granted refugee status and will have been granted leave to remain up to the age of 20 or an extension beyond the age of 18 for a minimum of one year.

1.5 The Joint Protocol Partners

Below is a list of the key partners involved with the Joint Protocol processes:

Bromsgrove District Council
 Redditch Borough Council
 Malvern Hills District Council
 Worcester City Council
 Wychavon District Council
 Wyre Forest District Council
 Worcestershire County Council

The signatories to this Joint Protocol are provided in Section 12

1.6 What is corporate parenting?

When a Child becomes Looked After by Worcestershire County Council, for whatever reason, the tasks that would normally be the responsibility of their parents become the responsibility of everyone at the county council and their partners.

'This means that we have a legal and moral responsibility to improve the lives of all of those we look after and who leave our care. Just as we would with our own children, we must prioritise their needs and create the right conditions for them to

thrive and have happy and fulfilling lives. This is a priority across the whole council and not just for those working in children's services' (Catherine Driscoll, DCS, Briefing Note for County Councillors, January 2017).

Being a good corporate parent means:

- Accepting responsibility for all children in the Council's care
 - Making their needs a priority
 - Seeking the same outcomes any good parent would want for their own child
 - Listening to the views of children and young people and taking account of them
 - Giving young people the support they need as they move into adulthood
- Working with partners to provide joined up services

2. The Legislative Context

Young people leaving care require the CFCD and LHAs to work together to ensure appropriate services are provided. This need for co-operation is recognised in legislation and accompanying guidance that highlights an expectation by central government that Children's Services and LHA forge proactive links with each other to ensure they can comply fully with inter-relating pieces of statute, prevent failures of responsibility, and ensure appropriate standards are met.

Social Care Legislation

2.1 The Children Act 1989

The main purpose of S23 of the Children Act is to improve the life chances of young people living in and leaving local authority care. Its principal aims are to:

- Delay a young person's discharge from care until they are prepared and ready to leave
- Improve the assessment, preparation and planning for leaving care
- Provide better personal support for young people leaving care
- Improve the financial arrangements for care leavers

Volume 3 (April 2011) of the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations provides guidance, primarily addressed to local authorities about their functions under Part 3 of the Children Act 1989. These regulations and guidance are designed to ensure care leavers are given the same level of care and support that their peers would expect from a reasonable parent and that they are provided with the opportunities and chances needed to help them move successfully to adulthood.

The Regulations and Guidance state that every Local Authority's aims and objectives must be to ensure:

- That young people leaving care have access to a range of accommodation options and the support and skills to maintain themselves in their accommodation
- That all Local Authorities should work to meet these aims
- That these responsibilities are laid on the Local Authorities as corporate bodies

Under section 27 of the Children Act 1989, a Local Authority can ask a range of other authorities, including a housing authority, to assist them in the exercise of their functions in relation to Children in Need and Looked After Children under Part 3 of the 1989 Act. The other authority must comply to the extent that the request is compatible with their own statutory duties and other obligations and would not unduly prejudice the discharge of their own functions.

The Regulations and Guidance detail how the local authority strategy for care leavers should take into account:

- The diverse accommodation and support needs of care leavers

- The capacity to offer Care Leavers a degree of choice of accommodation
- Existing and planned provision of safe affordable accommodation
- Gaps in provision
- Priority setting
- The need for contingency arrangements

2.2 Who is affected? Care Leavers and legal status:

Eligible Children:

Eligible Children are young people aged 16 or 17, who have been looked after by a local authority for a period of 13 weeks, or periods amounting in all to that, since the age of 14 and who are still Looked After.

Relevant Children:

Relevant Children are young people aged 16 and 17 who have been Looked After for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and have been Looked After at some time while 16 or 17 and who are no longer Looked After.

Former Relevant Children:

Former Relevant Children are young people aged 18-25 who have been either "Eligible" or "Relevant" Children, or both. If, at the age of 21, the Young person is still being assisted by the responsible authority with education or training, he or she remains "Former Relevant" to the end of the agreed programme of education or training.

Looked After Children are those in the care of the Local Authority either because of a Care Order (Section 31) or because they are accommodated voluntarily under (Section 20) of the Children Act 1989.

2.3 Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

This act amends the Children Act 1989 by replacing provisions in section 24 on aftercare of children looked after by Local Authorities. It also creates duties in relation to planning for children whose status as Looked After Children will be ending.

The Leaving Care Act has two main aims:

- To ensure that young people do not leave care until they are ready.
- To ensure that they receive more effective support once they have left

Local Authorities duties to Care Leavers under the Leaving Care Act:

Aged 16-18

- Duty to ensure a Pathway Plan is in place by 16th birthday

- Duty to make assessment and meet needs
- Duty to provide financial support
- Duty to provide Personal Adviser
- Duty to ensure accommodation

Aged 18-21

- Duty to maintain contact and to provide support through Personal Adviser
- Duty to assist with costs of education, employment and training

Aged 21 and over

- Duty to 18-25 year olds continues if still in full time education or training
- Duty to ensure vacation accommodation for higher education
- Rhys to add post 21 duty info

The Responsible Local Authority

The last Local Authority to look after the Young person is the Local Authority responsible for meeting duties under the Leaving Care Act wherever the Young person may be living in England or Wales.

Assessment

The CFCD (i.e. a Social Worker) must carry out an assessment of each **Eligible** and **Relevant** child. The Young person must be involved in the preparation and review of this assessment. This process will culminate in the first Pathway Plan.

Pathway Plan

The allocated Social Worker must prepare a Pathway Plan. This plan looks at the Young person's need for support and assistance as identified in the assessment and how these needs will be met until the age of 21.

Areas covered include:

- Accommodation
- Practical life skills
- Education and training
- Employment
- Financial support
- Specific support needs
- Contingency plans for support if independent living breaks down

Review of the Pathway Plan – The Social Worker / Personal Advisor must review the Pathway Plan:

- If the Young person requests it or;
- A Personal Adviser considers it necessary or;
- At intervals of not more than 6 months.

Personal Adviser

Each Young person covered by the act will have a Personal Adviser. The Personal Advisor does not have to be a Social Worker.

The Personal Adviser will be involved in:

- Providing advice and support
- Drawing up the Pathway Plan and ensuring it addresses any changing needs
- Keeping in touch with the Young person
- Co-ordinating services, linking in with other agencies

2.4 Children Act 2004

In autumn 2003 the Government published the Every Child Matters Green Paper. This led to the Children Act 2004. The emphasis in the Children Act 2004 is on the increasing need for agencies to work together and establish procedures to enable the sharing of information regarding children and young people at risk.

This means that joint protocols between agencies play an increasingly important part in formalising processes between agencies.

2.5 Children and Social Work Act 2017

The Act sets out corporate parenting principles for the council as a whole to be the best parent it can be to children in its care. Local authorities are required to publish their support offer to care leavers. Significantly, the legislation requires local authorities to provide PA support to care leavers up to the age of 25, irrespective of whether they are engaged in education or training. This includes care leavers who return to the local authority at any point after the age of 21 up to their 25th birthday and request PA support.

For care leavers aged 21 or over, the duties in the Children Act 1989 and those introduced through the Children & Social Work Act – to assess care leavers' needs and develop and keep under review a pathway plan – apply only where the young person requests this support.

2.6 Homelessness Legislation

While the primary responsibility for securing accommodation for care leavers rests with the LHA, it is essential that a corporate and multi-agency approach is adopted. The housing needs of care leavers should be addressed before they leave care.

Homelessness legislation places a general duty on LHAs to ensure that advice and information about homelessness, and preventing homelessness, is available to everyone in their district free of charge and that this must offer specific advice tailored for certain groups including care leavers. Under the Homeless Reduction Act local authorities are also required to develop Housing Pathways for specific groups including care leavers. The legislation also requires authorities to assist individuals and families who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and apply for help.

In 2002, the Government amended the homelessness legislation through *the Homelessness Act 2002* and the *Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation)*.

2.7 Homeless Reduction Act 2017

Local Authorities have a duty to prevent all households who are eligible and homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days, regardless of priority need or intentionality.:

These duties are called the Prevention Duty for those threatened with homelessness and the Relief Duty for those who are or become homeless.

Prevention Duty

The prevention duty requires a local authority to: -

- Assess the circumstances that lead to someone becoming threatened with homelessness or becoming homeless
- Assess the support needs that someone requires to both find and sustain accommodation
- To develop a personalised housing plan with the household.

These duties apply when a household is threatened with Homelessness in 56 days, Local authorities are able to assist prior to an applicant being homeless within 56 days and for Care Leavers should be acting at the earliest opportunity.

It is important that in assessing the circumstances that lead to a care leaver becoming homeless and the support that is required for them to find and retain accommodation, that this is done jointly with Worcestershire County Council so both teams are aware and can work jointly to determine what support needs the young person have and what support is available.

When carrying out the Prevention Duties of assessment and creation of a personalised housing plan, as per the Code of Guidance this should be done with the personal advisor.

For Care Leavers it is important that once accommodation has been found, local authorities and social services ensure sufficient support is in place to enable the young person to sustain the accommodation.

Relief duty

If the local authority is not able to secure accommodation it will owe a relief duty if the applicant has a local connection. If they lack a local connection the applicant can be referred to where they have a local connection. However, many care leavers, being accommodated in districts not out of their choice, do not develop a local connection for statutory purposes, despite engaging in education, or establishing support networks. Under the Homeless Reduction Act, a Young person will be deemed to have a local connection to all districts where they have been cared for. As such, if an individual is cared for by Worcestershire County Council, they will have local connections to Bromsgrove, Redditch, Malvern, Worcester, Wychavon or Wyre Forest local authority areas.

The relief duty is similar in many respects towards the prevention duty in that there is still a duty to assess the applicant's needs, how they became homeless, what support they need and develop or update their personalised housing plan and the guidance that applies to the Prevention duty will also apply to the relief duty.

The assessment and personalised housing plan is a live document and should be updated throughout the prevention and relief period if circumstances change.

If the individual may be eligible, homeless and in a priority need there will also be a duty under section 188 of the Housing Act 1996 to make interim accommodation available to the applicant. Care leavers will be owed the section 188 duty as they have a priority need for housing.

Ending the duties

Both the Prevention and Relief Duty can be brought to an end with a suitable offer of accommodation that is likely to last for 6 months or more. This includes supported accommodation placements and allows the local authority to make sure that young persons are not offered a general needs tenancy if they are not yet ready to sustain it and would benefit from supported living to build up their independent living skills.

If the Prevention Duty is ended and the applicant remains homeless, due to refusing a suitable offer, the applicant will proceed onto the relief duty.

If the relief duty is ended, and the applicant remains homeless due to refusing a suitable offer, and the offer was not a social or suitable private sector tenancy, the local authority will go onto consider if a main housing duty is owed.

If a suitable social or private sector tenancy is offered and refused, the local authority would not be required to go onto consider if a full housing duty is owed.

Housing Teams should liaise with the care leavers personal assistant to make sure that offers of accommodation are suitable and be mindful of issues raised by

applicants that would such as the need to continue education, employment or training as well as distance from support networks.

A care leaver can approach out of hours, the LHA are accessed via an emergency telephone number. The emergency number goes through to a control centre which is able to contact the Duty Housing Officer who can respond to an emergency homeless situation outside of working hours.

In most cases the Duty Housing Officer will make the decision on whether there is a statutory duty to provide interim/temporary accommodation or not (s 188). If no duty to provide interim / emergency accommodation is owed the Duty Housing Officer will still offer advice regarding how that individual or household could secure accommodation. The Duty Housing Officer should try to prevent or delay homelessness by negotiating with a care leavers accommodation provider, friends or relatives to allow the young person to remain, if only on a temporary basis. If the Out of Hours Housing Officer places a care leaver, they will notify the CFCD Emergency Duty Team.

2.6 Out of Hours Emergency Housing Service

- Out of Hours, the LHA are accessed via an emergency telephone number. The emergency number goes through to a control centre which is able to contact the Duty Housing Officer who can respond to an emergency homeless situation outside of working hours.
- In most cases the Duty Housing Officer will make the decision on whether there is a statutory duty to provide interim/temporary accommodation or not (s 188). If no duty to provide interim / emergency accommodation is owed the Duty Housing Officer will still offer advice regarding how that individual or household could secure accommodation. The Duty Housing Officer should try to prevent or delay homelessness by negotiating with a care leavers accommodation provider, friends or relatives to allow the young person to remain, if only on a temporary basis. If the Out of Hours Housing Officer places a care leaver, they will notify the CFCD Emergency Duty Team.

2.8 Priority Need

Under the Homelessness Act 2002, all homeless 16 and 17 year olds are in priority need, except those who are:

- A 'Relevant Child', or
- A 'Child in Need' who is owed a duty under s.20 of the Children Act 1989

A homeless person has a priority need for accommodation if he or she is a:

- Person under 21 who was (but is no longer) 'Looked After, accommodated' or fostered' between the ages of 16 and 18 (except a person who is a 'Relevant Student')
- Person aged 21 or more who is vulnerable as the result of having been Looked After, accommodated or fostered

The words 'Looked After, accommodated or fostered' have the same meaning as in section 24 (2) of the Children Act 1989 (as amended by the Children Leaving Care Act 2000). The term "Relevant Student" means a care leaver to whom section 24B (3) of the Children Act 1989 applies, who is in full-time further or higher education and whose term time accommodation is not available during a vacation.

For a Young person under 21 who was (but is no longer) 'Looked After, accommodated or fostered' at any time between the ages of 16 and 18 (except a person who is a 'relevant student') will be priority need as long as the applicant was 'Looked After, accommodated or fostered' at some stage when he or she was 16, 17 or 18 years of age, the criteria will be met. There is no prescribed minimum period of time during which he or she was 'Looked After, accommodated or fostered'.

However, it is important to note that the definition of 'Looked After, accommodated or fostered' goes beyond care leavers and includes three other groups of young people who have lived away from home in circumstances other than being in care. If he or she is accommodated by any of the following it would have to be for a consecutive period of at least three months:

- By any Health and Care NHS Trust, Primary Care Trust or Local Education Authority, or
- In any care home or independent hospital or in any accommodation provided by a National Health Service trust; or
- Privately fostered

2.9 Intentional Homelessness

Collaboration between the LHAs and CFCD is vital to ensure that care leavers do not 'slip through the net'. In certain circumstances a young person may be found to be intentionally homeless with no duty of rehousing owed to them. A young person may have made themselves homeless by leaving accommodation that was reasonable for them to continue to occupy or have been evicted because of rent arrears or anti-social behaviour. This does not mean an applicant will be intentionally homeless and intentionality should not be assumed. The Code of Guidance for Local Authorities advises that acts or omissions should not be treated as deliberate if they are:-

- Due to benefit issues beyond the applicants control
- The applicant is incapable of managing their affairs due to mental health, age or disability
- The act was done under duress
- The act or omission was due to a temporary aberration of the mind caused by mental health, frailty or an assessed substance abuse problem
- Imprudence or lack of foresight by the applicant but it was done in good faith

Individuals leaving care may be incapable of managing their affairs due to their age, lack of life experiences, due to traumatic experiences in their childhood, as such extra consideration should be given by local authorities to the challenging situations care leavers may find themselves in before making a finding of intentional homelessness. It is at the discretion of the Local Housing Authority to provide more than advice and assistance where a verdict of intentional homelessness has been reached.

If, after initial assessment under the prevention or relief duty, it becomes clear that a care leaver may be found intentionally homeless, the relevant social services team should be updated as soon as possible. They should ensure that all efforts are made to accommodate a young person in the prevention or relief stage or the homeless application process, to find suitable accommodation and as such avoid the need for a finding of intentionality.

2.10 Duty to Refer

Since October 2018 specified public authorities have been required, under the Homelessness Reduction Act, to refer potentially homeless applicants to the LHA. One of the specified public authorities includes social services (adult and children). The referral can only be made with the person's consent both to the referral and the sharing of information. The referral should be made when the officer believes the person is or is likely to become homeless. Details of what should be included in a referral is included at Appendix 3. A referral can be made directly to the LHA or via the Housing Jigsaw system ALERT (which is free to join). More information can be found on each Council's websites.

2.11 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

Under the Children Act 1989, all asylum applicants below the age of 18 who arrive in the UK without close adult family members, either accompanying them or already in the UK who they can join, are the responsibility of Local Authority social services departments, regardless of immigration status.

When the asylum seeker reaches the age of 18, the local authority has the power to assist a Former Relevant Child to the extent that her/his welfare requires it, and this includes the power to provide accommodation.

The Local Authority cannot pass the burden on to the UKBA when the former relevant child turned 18, as the UKBA are not required to provide accommodation if the asylum seeker (or failed asylum seeker) is entitled to accommodation [under some other provision. *s.23C(4)(c) Children Act 1989; R (on the application of SO) v London Borough of Barking and Dagenham[2010] EWCA Civ 1101*

If the asylum seeker reaches the age of 18 and is not a Former Relevant Child when s/he turns 18 any duty to accommodate will fall to the UKBA.,

Asylum seekers are not eligible for homelessness assistance from the Local Authority under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 unless granted some form of leave to

remain that makes them eligible (e.g. humanitarian protection). If their asylum claim is accepted, they are granted refugee status and become eligible for homelessness assistance from the local authority.

3. Overview of process – Worcestershire County Council

The preceding sections have explored why a joint protocol is needed, respective statutory duties and what CFCD and the LHAs need to achieve. The following two sections are concerned with the practicalities of how the organisations will work together to meet corporate parenting responsibilities; effectively translating legislation, policy and strategy into process and practice to improve outcomes. *As noted in Worcestershire's Care Leaver Strategy 2017-2019, 'Outcomes for children and young people who are in, or have left care, remain stubbornly worse than for other children and is something for which we must take collective responsibility. They do not do as well at school, are less likely to go on to higher education, more likely to be not in education, employment or training (NEET) and are over-represented in youth offending institutions'.*

Appropriate accommodation is a basic need and prerequisite to achieving a positive routine and outcomes. It is therefore essential that the CFCD and the LHAs develop their practice to *'start earlier, stay longer and join up'* in order to plan, support and sustain care leaver's transitions to independence.

3.1 The Locality and Looked After Child Permanency Teams

Worcestershire County Council, Social Work teams are organised geographically into localities. there are four dedicated Permanency Teams, which work with young people who are Looked After on a long-term basis. Referrals to the Care Leavers Service come mainly from the Permanency Teams but may also be forwarded from a locality team or the countywide Homeless Intervention Team, if the young person has become looked after aged 16 or 17yrs.

Every Looked After young person has an allocated Social Worker who is responsible for undertaking an assessment of need, devising a care plan to meet needs identified, and for reviewing care arrangements to ensure that the young person is safeguarded and appropriately supported.

Looked After Young People aged 16 and 17yrs may be accommodated in a variety of settings; the majority are placed with foster carers, although a significant proportion are looked after in residential care or supported accommodation in the community. Placement in supported accommodation pre 18yrs can be a valuable experience for many young people, allowing increasing autonomy and independence, with the provision of dedicated support from the Outreach Team (see 3.3). For this reason, Looked After young people may transfer to supported accommodation in their final year in care, if this is recommended following assessment.

Throughout the period that the young person is looked after, the allocated Social Worker and those providing direct support (e.g. foster carer) will work to promote the development of the skills and knowledge that s/he will need as a young adult. Key goals and tasks will be specified in the Pathway Plan, which will initially be produced by the Social Worker, and updated every six months thereafter (see 3.4).

At age 18yrs all young people cease to be Looked After, and the Social Worker will withdraw shortly following this, with case responsibility transferring to the Leaving Care Personal Advisor. The Personal Advisor will have been allocated and have supported work with the young person for a minimum of six months prior to this (see 3.2).

3.2 The Care Leavers Service

The Care Leavers Service currently consists of 2 Teams, North and South, each with a Team Manager, a Business Support Officer and 11 Personal Advisors who provide a County Wide service to around 500 care leavers and young people preparing to leave care.

All Care Leavers are now entitled to ongoing support and guidance up to their 25th Birthday.

After the age of 21 many care leavers wish to be more independent and may not necessarily want routine visits from a Personal Advisor (PA), a formal Pathway Plan or an allocated worker.

All care leavers may still benefit from support and advice from the Care Leavers Service and this is provided via our Post 21 Duty Service. This support can continue as long as it is required or up to a young person's 25th birthday.

Care leavers can contact the Duty Personal Advisors (available Monday – Friday 9.30am -12.30pm & 1.00pm – 3.00pm) on 01905 845613. Young people can also email the Duty PA's on CareLeaversDuty@worcestershire.gov.uk to request a call back or appointment outside of these times. Duty PA's are also available to meet with care leavers in the community. The Care Leavers Facebook page (Worcestershire Care Leavers) provides up to date information on drop-ins and events in all areas of the county.

Personal Advisors are accessible to young people, their carers and Social Workers from age 16 via a county wide drop-in service offering advice and guidance around transition planning.

A Personal Advisor is allocated to each care leaver not later than the age of 17.5 years, with that PA working with the young person, their Social Worker, any Outreach Team involvement and Housing with a focus on transition to independence.

Support continues until the age of 21, or up to the 25 birthday where the young person requests this. A guiding principle is to offer care leavers the same level of care and support their peers would expect from a reasonable parent, to enable them to achieve their potential, proving the opportunities and support needed to move successfully into adulthood.

3.3 The Outreach Team

The Outreach Team cover the whole of Worcestershire to provide transitional support to young people aged 16 to 18.5 years who are Looked After and are living (or about to live) independently. The Outreach Team provide supplemental support focused on assisting Young people to develop their independence skills and preparing them for a successful transition to adulthood, this can include a certificated qualification (ASDAN). This support can be intense and each plan of support is individual to the needs of the Young person.

The Outreach Team can also provide emergency support hours in times of acute crisis. This support can be accessed same day and applied flexibly, for example, supporting a Young person and their accommodation provision to manage crisis and prevent progression to same day eviction. The team work 365 days a year and cover evenings, weekends and Bank Holidays, working on a rota to provide a flexible service to meet the needs of young people.

3.4 The Pathway Plan

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 requires a Pathway Plan for all Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant Young People.

The Pathway Plan fulfils the requirements both for assessing the Young person's needs and planning services.

The Social Worker must complete a Needs Assessment within 3 months of a Young person becoming *an Eligible or Relevant Child* whether he or she does so upon turning 16 or later. It must also prepare a Pathway Plan for *Eligible and Relevant Children*, as soon as possible after completing the needs assessment

The young person's Social Worker (and Personal Adviser post 17) will be responsible for leading on the Pathway Plan up to the age of 18.

Arrangements to complete the first Pathway Plan should be discussed and agreed at the Young person's statutory Looked After (LAC) review meeting prior to their sixteenth birthday. The Pathway Plan must be completed no later than three months after the Young person's 16th birthday.

3.5 Young People and Pathway Planning

Young people should be actively involved in assessment and planning and remain central to their plan. A flexible and creative approach, which actively engages with young people themselves, will help ensure that the eventual plan is realistic and likely to be met. The Pathway Plan should also take account of any existing assessments and plans relating to the young person; Care Plan, Placement Plan or Personal Education Plan for example. The Pathway Plan should be written in clear, plain language and wherever possible, using the young person's own words.

3.6 Who is involved in Pathway Planning?

The following people should be consulted and their contributions sought, unless there is an exceptional reason not to do so:

- Care Leavers Service Personal Advisor (via drop-in or allocated PA for 17+)
- Young Persons Pathway Worker or other Housing representative
- Young person's Parents, or any other with Parental Responsibility
- Young person's carer, residential support worker or accommodation provider
- A representative of the young person's school, college or training provider
- GP, CAMHS worker or school nurse
- Youth Offending Service Officer (if involved)
- Any other person whom the young person considers relevant

The above list is not exhaustive and will be determined by the young person's circumstances.

A copy of the written Pathway Plan/review should be given to the young person and all those consulted with during the assessment process (with the consent of the young people involved). The Pathway Plan/review should be signed by the young person.

3.7 The contents of the Pathway Plan

The Pathway Plan must include:

- The name of the young person's Personal Adviser and arrangements for visiting the young person
- Details of any accommodation that the young person will occupy when (s)he ceases to be Looked After, and how this will be suitable in view of his/her assessed needs
- Plans for the young person's education or training when the young person ceases to be Looked After
- How the Local Authority will assist the young person in obtaining employment or other purposeful activity
- How the responsible authority will develop the practical and other skills that the young person will require
- Support to develop and sustain family and social relationships, and the capacity of the network to encourage the young person to make a positive transition to adulthood.
- The young person's financial capabilities and money management capacity.

- The young person's health care needs, and how such needs will be met when the young person ceases to be Looked After.
- Contingency arrangements in respect of each key area of the plan.

3.8 Review of the Pathway Plan

The allocated Social Worker will complete the initial Pathway Plan and subsequent reviews prior to the young person's 18th Birthday. The Personal Advisor will work alongside the allocated Social Worker up to 18. The purpose of reviewing the Pathway Plan is to update progress since the last review and to check that the goals and milestones are still appropriate, on track or being met.

The young person must be engaged in making the arrangements about how their Pathway Plan is to be reviewed.

Where young people have complex needs and a range of agencies are involved in supporting their Pathway Plan, it may be helpful to agree arrangements for a multi-agency meeting to confirm or review the plan.

Regulation 7 of the care leavers Regulations sets out the arrangements for reviewing the Pathway Plans of Relevant and Former Relevant young people. The regulations require the Local Authority to:

- Arrange a review in circumstances where it considers it necessary, or where the Relevant or Former Relevant Young Person requests it.
- Where a Relevant Young Person moves to unregulated accommodation, the first review of the Pathway Plan must take place as soon as is practical within 28 days.
- It is good practice for reviews to take place, usually within 28 days, after any change in the young person's accommodation.
- Reviews should always be brought forward where there is an assessed risk that a crisis may develop in a young person's life, especially in respect of accommodation.

Circumstances for a brought forward Pathway Plan review may include:

- Where a young person has been charged with an offence, and there is a possibility of being sentenced to custody; which will risk losing suitable accommodation.
- Where a young person is at risk of being evicted or threatened with homelessness.

- Where professionals are concerned about the parenting capacity of a Relevant or Former Relevant Young Person, with there being a possibility that their own Child may need to become the subject of a multi-agency safeguarding plan.
- Where a young person asks for a review of their plan.
- In circumstances where young people move in a planned way, the review will need to decide whether it will be necessary to review the Pathway Plan in 3 months, or whether 6 months is more appropriate.

3.9 Care Leavers in Custody – Relevant and Former Relevant

Where a Relevant or Former Relevant Young Person enters custody, pathway planning must continue. It is good practice for a visit to the young person within 10 working days. It is good practice to carry out a review of the Pathway Plan at least a month before release in order to give sufficient time for pre-release planning.

As soon as possible; ideally no later than 14 days before release, a care leaver must know:

- Who is collecting them;
- Where they will be living;
- The reporting arrangements;
- Sources of support – including out of hours;
- Arrangements for education or employment;
- Arrangements for meeting continuing health needs;
- Arrangements for financial support;
- When they can expect to be seeing their Personal Adviser;
- The roles and responsibilities of the respective leaving care and Youth Offending Officers

3.10 Keeping in Touch

The Pathway Plan must set out expectations for the Personal Adviser to see the young person, and if relevant, arrangements for staying in touch in other ways. This could include other forms of contact with the young person: text, telephone calls; e-mail.

Regulation 8(2) of the care leavers Regulations requires that when a care leaver moves to new accommodation, the Personal Adviser must see them within 7 days of the move, reviewing the Pathway Plan within 28 days. Subsequently, the PA must visit at no less than 2 monthly intervals. If contact with a young person is lost, reasonable steps should be taken to re-establish contact, especially with those who are within the definition of 'Relevant' Young People.

It is important that a young person's wishes are respected and that attempts to maintain or re-establish contact is not perceived as harassment, but to convey an interest in their well-being. The Personal Adviser should persevere with attempts on a 2 monthly basis to establish contact even if the young person remains unresponsive, while respecting the young person's rights to be unresponsive. Where contact is lost, the emphasis of the Pathway Plan review will switch to record how attempts will be made to re-establish contact and these efforts will be reviewed within the established system.

A route back for the young person to seek support in the future should be kept open and communicated, for example by sending birthday cards and appropriate festive greetings and ensuring that the young person receives any circulated information about services, drop-ins or events in which they may have an interest.

3.11 Record Keeping

Regulation 10 of the care leavers Regulations establishes a duty to maintain a case record which should include any assessment of needs, Pathway Plan, and any review of the Pathway Plan.

The Pathway Plan, and the assessment informing it, must provide a full and accurate record of the young person's needs with information about their wishes and feelings about their future.

If a Former Relevant Young Person is not intending to continue in an approved programme of education or training, then the Pathway Planning process should be brought to a conclusion in an agreed way around the time that the young person reaches the age of 21.

3.12 Pathway Plan - Young Person up to the age of 25

The local authority is required to offer all care leavers Personal Adviser support up to the 25 birthday and apply the corporate parenting principles when continuing support is agreed or requested.

However, the duty at this stage of a young adult's life is seen as different from the age 18 - 20 in that it enables the local authority to offer support to some individuals who may need continuing support in the transition process. The level of support and intervention will vary considerably; many at this stage of their lives will not require, or want, ongoing help and will not have a Pathway Plan. However, for others:

- There may be multiple issues which will require a plan being fully completed and regular contacts, planning/coordinating meetings with partner agencies, etc.
- Care leavers may have single or specific issues where they require support and guidance, e.g.

- Pregnancy or becoming a parent;
- Release from custody;
- Mental health issues;
- Risk of homelessness;
- Debt, including rent arrears;
- For advice or guidance on commencing education or training;
- For advice or support following experience of domestic or sexual violence/abuse.

Where care leavers require support with single or specific issues, a plan should be completed only in the relevant part that reflects the issues being dealt with.

3.13 Staying Put

Staying Put allows a Former Relevant Young Person to remain in a foster placement they were placed in (immediately before they ceased to be Looked After) beyond their 18th birthday in order to allow completion of a course of full-time education or training.

The intention of Staying Put arrangements is to ensure that young people can remain with their former foster carers until they are prepared for adulthood, can experience a transition akin to their peers, avoid social exclusion and be more likely to avert a subsequent housing and tenancy breakdown.

Discussion should start with the young person and Foster Carer regarding the option of staying put as early as possible, ideally before the young person reaches the age of 16. If this has not already been done, the first Looked After Review following his or her 16th birthday should consider whether a Staying Put arrangement should be an option. This will entail assessing the implications for both the young person and the Foster Carer.

The young person's Pathway Plan should set out all of the practical arrangements regarding the young person remaining as a Young Adult in the Staying Put arrangement. It should set out the 'ground rules' of the household as well as the areas of responsibility that all parties to the arrangement are expected to fulfil. Many of these will be an extension of the expectations on them when they were a Foster Child. This will cover arrangements such as:

- Preparation for adulthood and independence tasks;
- Finance, including young people having credit cards, loan agreements and mobile phone contracts registered at the address;
- Income and benefit claims;
- Friends and partners visiting and staying at the address;

- Staying away for nights/weekends and informing carers of movements;
- Education, training and employment activities;
- Health arrangements;
- Moving-on arrangements;
- Issues related to younger children in the placement, i.e. safeguarding, being a positive role model and time-keeping.

It should be assessed from the outset how the arrangement will help the young person develop the skills required for independent living once they move on. They should be supported to continue to develop a range of skills including:

- Relationships - getting on with neighbours; understanding acceptable behaviour; when and how to communicate with relevant professionals, developing positive social relationships;
- Emotional Resilience - managing isolation and where to go for support. Building self-esteem;
- Finance and budgeting - opening a bank account, safe borrowing and managing debt, understanding basic financial products, benefits and welfare reform; budgeting for priority bills, household appliances and everyday shopping on a budget;
- Cooking - cooking healthily and on a budget; understanding nutrition and its impact on overall health;
- Managing a home - washing and ironing, cleaning, basic DIY, operating appliances and what is allowed within a tenancy; and
- Applying for jobs - understanding strengths and areas for personal development; developing job skills, understanding job/volunteering pathways and support available; understanding bursaries and other financial support; where to go for advice; understanding the impact of work on benefits.

3.14 Ending of Staying Put Arrangements

The Staying Put arrangement extends until the young person leaves the Staying Put arrangement or the young person reaches their twenty-first birthday. Local Authorities may continue to support a young person beyond age 21 if it meets their individual needs, such as finishing their course of education.

The Local Authority will want to ensure that the end of a 'Staying Put' arrangement is not another 'cliff edge' for the young person but a gradual transition to independent living. Procedures should be agreed at the outset about how any wish by the carer to bring the arrangement to an end should be managed. The Social Worker / Personal Adviser should discuss with the young person their transition from such an arrangement to another type of accommodation and agree the type of support the young person will require. These arrangements should be developed alongside joint protocols with the Housing Authority, setting out how access to social housing and care leavers 'Priority Need' status will be discharged.

An excluded licensee can be asked to leave the property by the Staying Put carer, who must give 'reasonable notice'. In extreme circumstances it may be considered reasonable for the carer to give very short notice and ask the young person to leave on the same day.

3.15 Interface with Adults Services

The Staying Put framework is aimed at Former Relevant Children who require an extended period with their former Foster Carer/s due to delayed maturity, vulnerability and/or in order to complete their education or training. Where young people have an on-going cognitive disability and meet the adult services Fair Access to Care Services criteria (Putting People First), foster placements should be converted to Adult Placements/Shared Lives Arrangements when the Child reaches their eighteenth birthday. This is important to ensure that both the young person and the carer have a formal regulatory and safeguarding framework that addresses their respective needs.

Worcestershire County Councils Staying Put procedures in full can be found here: http://worcestershirescs.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_stay_put.html

3.16 Out of Hours Worcestershire County Council - Emergency Duty Team

Worcestershire County Council's Emergency Duty Team (EDT) can only deal with emergencies that occur outside of normal working hours (9-5 Monday – Friday). EDT will not continue work which has been started by daytime colleagues. If an emergency arises within office hours it is the responsibility to the lead allocated worker and team to ensure that any crisis is satisfactorily resolved.

Out of Hours, if a care leaver appears to be immediately homeless, EDT will seek to negotiate with their accommodation provider, friends and family on their behalf and seek to prevent or defer homelessness crisis. Where it is not possible to prevent homelessness EDT will contact the young person's local Housing Options Service and seek to jointly agree an appropriate response. Additionally, care leavers

requiring urgent support or advice not relating to homelessness (outside of office hours) can contact EDT on 01905 768020.

3.17 Care Leavers in Bed and Breakfast

As noted in S5.7, Bed and Breakfast type accommodation as an emergency response for Care Leavers is not considered appropriate. LHA's will strive not to use B&B for care leavers except as an option of absolute last resort if no other accommodation can be sourced but a S188 duty has been triggered.

Where this situation does arise the LHA will notify the CFCD in at the earliest opportunity, sharing information around how this situation has arisen and working with the Care Leavers Service to identify if there are any actions that can be taken by either organisation to achieve a move on to appropriate accommodation. On these occasions DCS oversight will be sought by Care Leavers Service Team Managers who will provide a clear context, rationale and proposed move on plan.

Progress of the move on plan will be reviewed regularly via case supervision (until move on is achieved) by the Leaving Care Team Manager, with actions and decision making recorded on Frameworki.

There is a commitment on the part of both the LHAs and CFCD to identify and/or source alternative emergency accommodation for care leavers to avoid the use of B&B.

4. Housing / Care Leavers Panel

Panel meetings are the mechanism by which CFCD notify the LHAs of care leavers with complex needs approaching transition age meeting bi-monthly Panel meetings provide the opportunity for the LHA and CFCD to work together to consider a young person's independence readiness and accommodation needs; ensuring any associated practicalities are addressed prior to leaving care and that plans progress. Housing Panel is also an opportunity for both the LHAs and CFCD discuss post 18 care leavers where complex or high needs require joint planning and decision making to prevent or relieve homelessness.

4.1 Panel Format, Frequency and Location

Panel convenes on the first Wednesday of month, every other month with North Panel held in the morning at BDHT offices (BDHT, Redditch, Wyre Forest) and South Panel held at Pershore Hub (Wychavon, Worcester, Malvern).

4.2 Who attends Panel

Panel meetings will be chaired by the Leaving Care Team Manager with the following professionals attending as required:

- Social Worker and/or Personal Advisor, bringing up to date case details and plan
- Young Person's Pathway Worker or
- Designated Housing Options Officer from each LHA
- The Outreach Team Manager
- Any other relevant partner agency e.g. accommodation provider

4.3 What will happen at the Panel meeting

The sharing of information between agencies is essential in order to meet the housing needs of young people leaving, or who have left, care; Panel will:

- Ensure care leavers have realistic accommodation plans to prevent the need to routinely use the homeless route
- Jointly ensure that all agencies are aware of the housing needs of young people leaving care and the responsibilities of each agency towards them
- Undertake early identification of gaps in provision and to work together, creatively, to address them
- Consider the housing options and plan for care leavers and their specific accommodation and support needs, focusing on those with significant or complex needs

Identify decisions, actions and timescales, reviewing each young person's accommodation plan as required

- Consider tenancy readiness and, where a young person has evidenced they are ready to progress to a tenancy, recommend registration with the Home Choice Plus system.

5. Overview of Process – LHA

The primary responsibility for securing accommodation for Former Relevant Care Leavers rests with the LHAs. However, in order to ensure positive, sustainable accommodation outcomes, young people need to be well prepared for, and well matched to, proposed move-on provision. It is therefore essential that the CFCD works with the LHA to ensure that accurate assessments of need and realistic plans, written with input from Housing Options Officers and Young Persons Pathway Workers, lead to appropriate, timely provision with the support required give young people the maximum chance of success.

5.1 Identifying suitable Housing Options & joining the Housing Register

An offer of a tenancy in a self-contained flat may not be the most appropriate form of accommodation for a young person leaving care; the consequences of a premature, failed attempt at independent living can be negative and enduring. There needs to be a range of Housing Options for care leavers not yet ready to take on the responsibilities of a tenancy.

The Multiagency Care Leavers Panel and Pathway Planning processes will support evidence based, joint decision making regarding which accommodation best suits a young person's needs as they progress. However, each care leaver approaching transition will also need to be supported to attend an initial (Housing Options) joint-assessment interview attended by the Social Worker / Personal Advisor / Outreach Worker and Housing Options Officer, during which the accommodation aspect of their Pathway Plan and options can be discussed. Care leavers require support to complete their registration with their LHA no later than nine months prior to their 18th Birthday.

This approach empowers young people by giving them information and advice about the options and enables them to make informed decisions

In exceptional cases, a young person's support needs and/or risk assessment may make mainstream supported housing options unsuitable. In these cases, discussion will need to take place between officers to determine the most appropriate provision.

5.2 Home Choice Plus and Redditch Home Choice

Once a care leaver is jointly agreed as demonstrating readiness for progression to a tenancy registration with Home Choice Plus or Redditch Home Choice will be progressed. Home Choice Plus is the partnership letting scheme used to allocate Housing Association properties across the participating Local Authority areas, which include:

- Bromsgrove District Council
- Malvern Hills District Council
- Worcester City Council
- Wychavon District Council
- Wyre Forest District Council

Registration with Home Choice Plus allows viewing and bidding for properties across the participating Local Authority areas. Redditch Borough Council are not part of the partnership and operate their own housing register through Redditch Home Choice.

For full details please see: www.homechoiceplus.org.uk or <http://www.redditchhomechoice.org.uk>

Once living in independent accommodation care leavers will continue to have the support of an allocated Personal Advisor from the Leaving Care Service up to the age of 21 (or 25 if in full time education).

Redditch Home Choice

Redditch Borough Council applies Redditch Home Choice and applies a Supported Accommodation 'Move On' scheme. Allocations are managed via an agreement between the district council and the Supported Housing Provider which seeks to gauge readiness for move on. In order to progress a young person requires a 'Move On Request' from their supported accommodation recommending that they are ready to move to independent settled social housing, and that any ongoing support needs have been assessed and planned for. Once agreed, the young person will be registered on Redditch Home Choice in Gold Band and RBC seek a suitable property. The applicant is unable to make bids themselves.

5.3 Young Persons Pathway Worker

Located within each LHA is a Young Persons Pathway Worker (YPPW) who works with young people aged 16-21 (and up to 25 for Care Leavers) who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or who require support to prevent homelessness. Working jointly with Social Workers and Personal Advisors to assess accommodation and support needs, the YPPW can assist with both short term and longer terms options and services intended to support young people make a planned transition into independent living. The YPPWs work closely with a range of other organisations offering services to this age group.

5.4 Accommodation options for Care Leavers in Worcestershire

Housing Options in each Local Housing Authority will vary. Below are listed some of the main accommodation pathways that young people can take, some short term or transitional, some longer term. It needs to be remembered that young people may not progress through accommodation options in a linear or sequential fashion:

- Social Housing
- Private rented accommodation
- Return to birth family
- Supported living providers
- Supported accommodation projects
- Supported Lodgings
- CFCD internal supported living provision (UASC awaiting Home Office status)

- Staying Put
- Crash Pads / Safe Bases
- Training flats
- Hostels

5.5 Discretionary Housing Payments

Where housing costs under Universal Credit are in payment care leavers may be eligible for Discretionary Housing Payments if suffering financial hardship. A financial assessment forms part of the decision. Discretionary Housing Payments can cover certain accommodation costs either as a one-off payment or on an ongoing basis.

If a care leaver is receiving Housing Benefit and has a shortfall between their rent and Housing Benefit entitlement, Discretionary Housing Payments may be able to be awarded to help with the shortfall.

Discretionary Housing Payments cannot be used to cover some services included in the rent as a service charge. An award to help with a rent shortfall will normally be made for a short period rather than permanently or long term. Awards are generally intended as a stop gap to give the tenant time to resolve financial problems by looking at options such as finding cheaper accommodation or increasing their income e.g. finding work. Individual circumstances will however be considered in deciding the length of an award.

Discretionary Housing Payments can also be made for one off accommodation associated expenses such as rent in advance or deposits.

5.6 Homelessness Crisis

A significant aim of this protocol is to avoid situations when a care leaver becomes homeless by applying effective and timely preparation, careful consideration of appropriate accommodation options, and seeking to intervene assertively where things do start to go wrong.

Housing providers are responsible for ensuring that young people are supported so that they do not leave accommodation in an unplanned way. Every effort should be made to ensure that all appropriate action is taken to support young people to maintain their accommodation and that LHAs (specifically the Young Person's Pathway Workers) and Personal Advisors are alerted where a young person is at risk of losing their tenancy. However, there are occasions when a care leaver may become homeless with immediate effect, for example, due to violence or severe anti-social behaviour.

Whilst using temporary emergency accommodation should be a last resort, in some cases there may be no suitable alternative accommodation available. In such circumstances, emergency accommodation needs to be made available. Bed and Breakfast type accommodation as an emergency response for Care Leavers is not considered appropriate; however, there is the recognition that LHAs may need to use

B&B if no other accommodation (e.g. Crash Pad) can be sourced but a S188 duty has been triggered. Where this situation does arise the LHA needs to ensure the Care Leavers Service is notified at the earliest opportunity, supporting swift review and exploration of appropriate move on options.

5.7 Care Leavers returning to live with birth family

A significant number of young people leaving care return to live with their birth family (12% of care leavers aged 19 nationally). For many young people this is a positive and successful outcome, and where it is appropriate and planned the young person should be supported to return. However, prior to a return to family its needs to be considered:

- Is this the best outcome for the young person?
- Is it a safe and supportive place for them to live?
- Is it sustainable and what support is needed to make it a lasting success?
- Has a family meeting been considered?
- Would a referral for family mediation to support reunification be helpful?
- Would a phased return home test viability and increase chances of success?
- Is there a robust contingency plan?

6. Young People – Concerns and Advocacy

The signatories to this Joint Protocol recognise that despite the arrangements outlined within this protocol, some young people will have difficulty in understanding or will lack confidence in the assessment process. There may be young people who are dissatisfied with the response of the agencies once they have been assessed.

In order to ensure that these young people may confidently explore their housing options, they should be made aware of any complaints, reviews, and appeal, procedures.

The CFCD use NYAS to provide independent advice to children and young people. Further information about can be found here: <http://www.nyas.net>

7. Worcestershire County Council and Local Housing Authority Disputes

Where disagreements occur about referrals, service provision or the conduct and behaviour of staff from either Worcestershire County Council or the Local Housing Authority, the individual staff member should discuss these in the first instance with their own line manager.

If, after discussions between the Local Housing Authority and Worcestershire County Council, agreement on action cannot be reached, a discussion should take place between senior officers from the Local Housing Authority and Worcestershire County Council on the day of presentation. If necessary a meeting should be convened with relevant senior managers from Worcestershire County Council, the Local Housing Authority and any other relevant agency.

The above process does not preclude a young person, or a person acting on their behalf, from exercising their statutory right to a review under Part VI and Part VII () of the Housing Act 1996 if they are unhappy with a decision made under this legislation. Requests for review should be made in writing to the appropriate Housing Options Service within 21 days of the written decision.

In addition to the above, Worcestershire County Council has an established procedure for the consideration of representations and complaints. In the event of a dispute in relation to a service being offered or not being offered by Worcestershire County Council, the young person, or someone acting on their behalf, has a right to access the statutory complaints procedure (s26 Children Act 1989). For further advice on this process, information leaflets are available from the Consumer Relations Officer who can be contacted for advice on 01905 846364.

8. Joint Protocol Information Sharing

In order to assist young people speedily and appropriately, and help avoid the duplication of work, agencies working with young people will need to share information about individuals. In doing this, agencies and staff need to be aware of their information sharing obligations regarding the exchange of any information.

Only information that is necessary for the planning and carrying out of effective services for the young people should be shared. When sharing or receiving information, agencies must acknowledge that any information relating to a service user is of a sensitive nature and must be kept confidential at all times.

It is essential to seek the young person's and, where appropriate, their parent(s) or other person with parental responsibility's consent to share information (especially where a young person may not be able to give informed consent e.g. a young person with a learning disability, difficulty or issues of capacity), except where NOT sharing information may place the young person at risk or likelihood of significant harm. According to the Children Act 1989 'harm' "means ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development". In such cases information may be shared with other agencies without the young person or parent(s)'s consent. The Housing Referral Form contains an authorisation for the young person to agree to the exchange of information.

Although some 16 or 17 year old young people may refuse to give their permission for WCC / WCF to provide the LHA with a copy of the Single Assessment (or other assessments), in the interests of safeguarding the young person's welfare, WCC / WCF may decide that it needs to override the refusal to consent and share with the relevant LHA at least the outcomes of those assessments.

Similarly, the LHA may need to share with WCC / WCF the outcome of the young person's housing needs assessment. Both agencies must therefore make it clear to the young person where the agencies consider it necessary to share information with each other, and what information they will share, notwithstanding the young person's refusal of consent. If the young person does refuse or withdraw consent, the implications of this must be fully explained.

Data protection legislation is not a barrier to sharing information, but is a framework to ensure that information

- is shared appropriately and responsibly;
- is managed in a sensible way;
- maintains and strengthens safeguarding;
- preserves the privacy of individuals; and balances public protection against the benefit of the individual.

Further information about information sharing can be found in the following documents:

- HM Government Information Sharing Advice to Practitioners, including the seven golden rules to sharing information:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721581/Information_sharing_advice_practitioners_safeguarding_services.pdf
- Appendix 3 – Worcestershire Joint Protocol for Young People (16 and 17 Year Olds) Information Sharing Agreement (ISA)

9. Joint Working between LHAs and Worcestershire County Council

It is envisaged that in order for the Joint Protocol to be effective, there will be a need to develop a close working relationship between the agencies.

9.1 Meetings

Reviewing the Joint Protocol will be undertaken by the post 16 working group which includes senior officers from the LHAs, officers from Worcestershire County Council, and, where appropriate other organisations.

9.2 Training

There will be ongoing inter-agency training, between Worcestershire County Council and the LHA relevant to their respective work as well as training with a wider set of organisations in relation to this protocol. Courses that may be relevant include those relating to young people, homelessness, housing rights, family mediation, drug and alcohol misuse, domestic violence/abuse and risk management.

The respective agencies will aim to make resources available for such purposes, where it has been agreed that the training will be beneficial to officers of both agencies, in their work with homeless young people.

Where relevant Worcestershire County Council and the LHA will build into induction programmes specific information about services and this protocol for their new staff and will support good practise initiatives such as the exchange of staff for training opportunities between housing and all Worcestershire County Council teams.

9.3 National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum

Worcestershire County Council has joined The National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum which is a specialist peer support network open to all Local Authorities with 85 already being members. Membership will ensure that the service is up to date with the latest developments in leaving care through specialist peer learning and development for managers and staff, associated young people's forum and a dedicated online network.

10. Monitoring and Review of the Joint Protocol

10.1 Monitoring of the Joint Protocol

The success of this Joint Protocol is measured on the number of young people prevented from becoming homeless and the successful sustainment of tenancies of young people who have been referred through this Joint Protocol process.

Worcestershire County Council, and the LHA, will monitor what happens to the young person following a referral and this will be used to gauge the effectiveness of this Joint Protocol. Each statutory authority should develop a system to keep records of the number of referrals where the Joint Protocol is used and the outcomes for the young persons involved.

10.2 Review of the Joint Protocol

An annual meeting will take place to review the Joint Protocol, and the working relationship between Worcestershire County Council and the LHA. This meeting will be held within one month of the anniversary of the adoption of this Joint Protocol. Worcestershire County Council and the LHA representatives will seek approval for the changes from the Chair of the Worcestershire Strategic Housing Officers' Group (WSHOG) and the Director responsible for Children and Families at Worcestershire County Council.

Should either party feel that the Joint Protocol needs to be formally reviewed, and/or amended, prior to the annual meeting; a meeting will be arranged for this purpose. If any other agency feels that the Joint Protocol is not working then they can make written representations to Worcestershire County Council and the relevant LHA who will take these representations into consideration at the annual review.

11. Agreed working definitions

Eligible Children are young people aged 16 and 17 who have been Looked After for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who are still Looked After.

Relevant Child/Children are young people aged 16 and 17 who have been Looked After for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and have been Looked After at some time while 16 or 17 and who are no longer Looked After (i.e. an 'Eligible Child'). In addition, a child is also a Relevant Child if he or she would have been Looked After by the Local Authority as an Eligible Child but for the fact that on his or her 16th birthday he or she was detained through the criminal justice system, or in hospital, Or if he or she has returned home on family placement and that has broken down.

Former Relevant Children are young people aged 18-21 who have been either "Eligible" or "Relevant" Children or both. If, at the age of 21, the young person is still being assisted by the responsible authority with education or training, he or she remains "Former Relevant" to the end of the agreed programme of education or training.

NB. Looked After Children are those in the care of the Local Authority either because of a Care Order (Section 31) or Accommodated (Section 20) of the Children Act 1989.

Looked after, accommodated or fostered has the same meaning as given by section 24(2) of the Children Act 1989. **Child** is a person under the age of 18 are defined by s.105 of the Children Act 1989.

Child in Need is a Child who is 'in need' as defined in s.17(10) of the Children Act 1989.

Relevant student means a care leaver under 24 to whom section 24B(3) of the Children Act 1989 applies, and who is in full-time further or higher education and who term-time accommodation is no available during a vacation.

Joint Protocol is the Worcestershire Joint Protocol for care leavers

Children's Social Care was established by Worcestershire County Council under the Children Act (2004) to provide strategic leadership on partnership co-operation.

Local Housing Authorities (LHA) are the district councils of Worcestershire and these are Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils, Malvern Hills District Council, Worcester City Council, Wychavon District Council and Wyre Forest District Council. For the purposes of this Joint Protocol when referring to LHA this is taken to include:

- Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT) which carries out the homelessness functions and provide housing advice in Bromsgrove District on behalf of Bromsgrove District Council;

Family Front Door is Worcestershire County Council's single way to report a concern about a Child or request additional help for a family. The Family Front Door is a working term for a service that brings together the Children's Social Care Access Centre, Early Help Hub and other complementary services to act as a single contact route into targeted and specialist support services for children and families.

12. Statement of Commitment and Signatories

All signatories to this document commit to upholding the processes outlined within the Joint Protocol, to working together in constructive dialogue with the partners, and to seeking the best possible collective outcomes for Care Leavers.

We commit to working professionally, openly and flexibly to achieve the aims of this Joint Protocol.

We are committed to developing services to prevent young people from becoming homeless.

We commit to attendance at relevant meetings where they are called, and to respond to requests for information in a timely and appropriate manner.

We commit to participating in and facilitating multi-agency training and awareness relevant to this Joint Protocol, in order to increase the understanding of the terms of the Joint Protocol and the role that different organisations and agencies have in delivering its aims.

Each signatory also commits to ensuring that its staff and officers are aware of and understand the terms of the Joint Protocol, including its aims, and will ensure that properly timely training is given to new staff and officers to assure its effective operation.

This Joint Protocol has been signed up to and agreed by the following on behalf of the Worcestershire County Council and the LHA.

Signed by: Print Name: Date: On Behalf of Bromsgrove District Council	Signed by: Print Name: Date: On Behalf of Malvern Hills District Council
Signed by: Print Name: Date: On Behalf of Redditch Borough Council	Signed by: Print Name: Date: On Behalf of Worcester City Council

<p>Signed by:</p> <p>Print Name:</p> <p>Date:</p> <p>On Behalf of Wychavon District Council</p>	<p>Signed by:</p> <p>Print Name:</p> <p>Date:</p> <p>On Behalf of Wyre Forest Council</p>
<p>Signed by:</p> <p>Print Name:</p> <p>Date:</p> <p>On Behalf of Worcestershire County Council</p>	

Appendix 1 - Local District Arrangements

District	Contact details	What is available	How to access support	Information
Bromsgrove	For Housing Register, Housing Advice and Homelessness Service Operational – Bromsgrove District Housing Trust Buntsford Court, Buntsford Hill, Bromsgrove, B60 3DJ 01527 557557 0800 0850 160 housingneeds@bdht.co.uk	St Basil's Bromsgrove Foyer 150, New Road, Bromsgrove, B60 2LG	Referrals via BDHT or Young People's Pathway Worker Social Care can direct refer Strict eligibility criteria and acceptance by Foyer Panel.	Support for residents only
	Young Persons Pathway Worker Marica Hoppe Based at Bromsgrove, St Basil's Foyer	St Basil's Crash Pad St Basil's Bromsgrove Foyer 150, New Road, Bromsgrove, B60 2LG	Referrals for The Crash Pad through Bromsgrove District Housing Trust Homeless and Housing Needs Team.	Emergency temporary Accommodation for Homeless Young People (priority for 16 and 17 year olds)
	01527 572050 07867355357	The Basement Project Hanover House, 1, Hanover Street, Bromsgrove, B61 7JH 01527 832993	Direct to The Basement Project or BDHT Housing Advice Team	Support for Young people to secure and maintain housing. Mediation
	Strategic and in relation to Joint Protocol Amanda Delahunty Bromsgrove District Council Parkside Market Street Bromsgrove B61 8DA	Fry Housing Association 42B Worcester Road, Bromsgrove, B61 7AE 01527 578449	Agency Referrals direct to Fry HA or BDHT Housing Advice Team	Shared and Independent supported housing Support for clients in tenancies Criteria – Supported Accommodation for ex-offenders or those at risk of offending 18+

		Starlight Community Centre 13, Humphrey Avenue, Charford, B60 3JB 01527 833886		Community Project Support Groups for Young People specifically Autism Spectrum Conditions Digital Assistance Job Coach/Job Club Parenting & Family support
Malvern Hills	For Housing register, housing advice and homelessness service	Young Person Pathway Worker	Self-referral or via Housing Service	Advice and assistance for 16 – 23 year olds at risk of homelessness
	Operational – Gay Lloyd, Principal Housing Officer Civic Centre, Queen Elizabeth Drive, Pershore. WR11 1PT Tel: 01386 565292 or Tel: 01386 565000 x 5292 E-mail: gay.lloyd@wychavon.gov.uk Young Peoples Pathway Worker – Simon Thompson Simon.thompson@wychavon.gov.uk 01386 565000 Strategic & in relation to Joint Protocol – Elaine Salter, Housing Services Manager - Working across both Malvern Hills and Wychavon councils, Civic Centre, Queen Elizabeth Drive, Pershore. WR11 1PT	South Worcestershire Nightstop - mediation and host family services	Self-referral or via Housing Service	Emergency accommodation with hosts and mediation service for 16 – 25 year olds
		Malvern Foyer / Bath Road / Heenan Court	Via Young Person Pathway Worker or Housing Service	Foyer 16-21 year olds / Bath Road 18 – 21 year olds / Heenan Court over 18 year olds. Referral through an allocation policy and there is a strict eligibility criteria
		YMCA	Self-referral or via Housing Service	Referral goes through an allocation policy and there is a strict eligibility criteria including local connection
		RAFT	Self-referral or via Housing Service	Tenure blind tenancy support
		St Pauls hostel	Self – referral or via Housing Service	Hostel accommodation for over 18 year olds

Redditch	For Housing register, housing advice and homelessness service Operational – Brenda Holden Acting Housing Options Manager, Town Hall Walter Stranz Square Alcester Street Redditch B98 8AH	St Basils supported accommodation	Referrals for support should be through the Housing Advice team at The Hub	Referral goes through an allocation policy and there is a strict eligibility criteria including local connection.
		St Basils Crash Pad	Referrals for crash pad should be made through the Housing Advice Team	Emergency accommodation for homeless Young People (priority to 16 & 17 year olds)
	01527 534 069 01527 64252 homelessnesssteam@redditch.gov.uk	Smallwood Almshouse	Direct access Bromford housing or referral via housing options team	Supported housing for first time parents single and couples aged 16-23
	Young Peoples Pathway Worker - Charlie Godsill 01562 534-069	Nightstop	Self-referral or via HAT	Emergency accommodation with hosts, education project and mediation service for 16 - 25
	Strategic & in relation to Joint Protocol – Amanda Delahunty, Strategic Housing and Enabling Officer, Redditch Borough Council, Town Hall, Walter Stranz Square, Redditch B98 8AH 01527 881269	YMCA	Referrals for support should be through the Housing Advice team at The Hub	Referral goes through an allocation policy and there is a strict eligibility criteria including local connection
Worcester	01905 721172 housing@worchester.gov.uk laura.doherty@worchester.gov.uk 07917130637	Young Person pathway Worker YMCA, Nightstop Mediation and host family services, Bath Road, Heenan's, Fortis Living Young Family Support, Henwick Road	Complete a homeless assessment form accessed via http://www.worcester.gov.uk/homeless-or-at-risk-of-homelessness	

Wychavon	<p>For Housing register, housing advice and homelessness service</p> <p>Operational – Gay Lloyd, Principal Housing Officer Civic Centre, Queen Elizabeth Drive, Pershore. WR11 1PT Tel: 01386 565292 or Tel: 01386 565000 x 5292 E-mail: gay.lloyd@wychavon.gov.uk</p> <p>Young Peoples Pathway Worker Simon Thompson Simon.thompson@wychavon.gov.uk 01386 565000</p> <p>Strategic & in relation to Joint Protocol– Elaine Salter, Housing Services Manager Working across both Malvern Hills and Wychavon councils, I Civic Centre, Queen Elizabeth Drive, Pershore. WR11 1PT</p>	Young Person Pathway Worker	Self-referral or via Housing Service	Advice and assistance for 16 – 23 year olds at risk of homelessness
		South Worcestershire Nightstop - mediation and host family services	Self-referral or via Housing Service	Emergency accommodation with hosts and mediation service for 16 – 25 year olds
		Bath Road / Heenan Court	Via Young Person Pathway Worker or Housing Service	Foyer 16-21 year olds / Bath Road 18 – 21 year olds / Heenan Court over 18 year olds. Referral through an allocation policy with strict eligibility criteria
		YMCA	Self-referral or via Housing Service	Referral goes through an allocation policy and there is a strict eligibility criteria including local connection
		YMCA crash pads	Via Housing Service only	Emergency accommodation for 16 – 25 year olds
		RAFT	Self-referral or via Housing Service	Tenure blind tenancy support
		St Pauls hostel	Self – referral or via Housing Service	Hostel accommodation for over 18 year olds

Appendix 2 - Accommodation Schemes

Worcester City

Organisation/Scheme	Provision
Worcestershire YMCA – Worcester YMCA Foyer	34 units of supported accommodation, of which 2 are used as training rooms and 2 are used for move on accommodation. Referral only and accepted after Interview.
Worcestershire YMCA – Worcester YMCA Safebases	6 safe base units. Referral by Childrens Services only.
South Worcestershire Nightstop	South Worcestershire Nightstop (up to four nights) and South Worcestershire Nightstop Plus (up to 8 weeks).
St. Paul's Hostel	St. Paul's hostel offers 48 units of accommodation but this accommodation is very rarely used for accommodating under 18s.
Festival Housing Group - Bath Road Scheme for Young People	12 one bedroom flats and the scheme is staffed from 9.00am until 8.00pm Monday to Friday. Must be living in or have a connection with Worcester City.
St Basils Home2Home Supported Lodgings Scheme	Hosts will provide a young person (16 to 21) with accommodation within their home and support them to develop all the necessary skills they will need to move on to independent living. Referrals can only be made by Children's Services.
Worcestershire YMCA/Rooftop 'Harrington Court' in Worcester City	New Rooftop development in Lowesmoor. Agreement to be signed between Worcestershire YMCA, Rooftop and Worcester City Council for 3 x 2B flats for under 35s. Worcester City Council to be able to make nominations to the flats.
Worcestershire YMCA St. George's Lane	Property with 7 bedrooms and one bedsit.
Bromford Housing – Lygon Court scheme	Bromford Housing (old Daisy Chain) The Worcestershire Young Families Services is based at Lygon Court AND offers housing related floating support on a Monday to Friday, 9-5 basis. The scheme comprises of 5 self contained flats, 3 houses and resettlement support for 4 customers who are living in Worcester The service promotes and encourages successful and sustainable

	<p>tenancies by working with individuals for up to and usually no more than 2 years to develop the skills required to live independently within the wider community. The support offered by Bromford Housing Group is flexible and is tailored to meet the particular needs of each individual person. The service can be accessed by young parents between the ages of 16 and 24, who are pregnant or have children under the age of 4.</p>
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Wychavon

Accommodation Schemes

Organisation/Scheme	Provision
Worcester YMCA Foyer	Accommodation based in Worcester City but countywide accommodation scheme.
Crash pad: Worcester YMCA Foyer	Provision of one crash pad within Worcester YMCA Foyer. Not exclusively for 16-25 age group.
St Basils Home2Home Supported Lodgings Scheme	<p>Hosts will provide a young person (16 to 21) with accommodation within their home and support them to develop all the necessary skills they will need to move on to independent living.</p> <p>Referrals can only be made by Children's Services.</p>

Wyre Forest

Accommodation Schemes

Organisation/Scheme	Provision
Wyre Forest Shared House for Young People	Owned by WFCH with floating support provided by St Basil's. Shared house providing 3 bed spaces.
Wyre Forest Nightstop	Safe emergency accommodation for Young People aged 16-25, on a one night at a time basis in the homes of trained, approved volunteer hosts.
St. Basil's supported accommodation, Kidderminster	18 units of 'foyer' type supported accommodation for under 25's. A mixture of studio and one bedroom flats and also

	has a training kitchen, and communal space.
St Basils Crash Pad	1 unit of emergency accommodation located within the supported accommodation, for 16 and 17 year olds and other vulnerable young people.
St Basils Home2Home Supported Lodgings Scheme	Hosts will provide a young person (16 to 21) with accommodation within their home and support them to develop all the necessary skills they will need to move on to independent living. Referrals can only be made by Children's Services.

Bromsgrove

Accommodation Schemes

Organisation/Scheme	Provision
St Basil's 150, New Road Bromsgrove B60 2LG	15 units of 'foyer' type supported accommodation for under 23's. A mixture of studio and one bedroom flats and also has a training kitchen, communal spaces and an ICT room.
St. Basil's mYPlace scheme	Access to the Private Rented Sector through the mYPlace scheme.
St Basils Home2Home Supported Lodgings Scheme	Hosts will provide a young person (16 to 21) with accommodation within their home and support them to develop all the necessary skills they will need to move on to independent living. Referrals can only be made by Children's Services.
Worcester YMCA Foyer	Accommodation based in Worcester City but countywide accommodation scheme.

Malvern Hills

Accommodation Schemes

Organisation/Scheme	Provision
Festival Housing Group, Malvern Hills Foyer	<p>There is a 16 bed foyer in Malvern. Accommodation based scheme with resettlement support. Individual rooms for 16-25 year olds who need foyer accommodation. Referrals only by statutory and voluntary agencies only.</p> <p>3 self-contained flats at Somers Park Avenue Malvern which is used as move on accommodation from the Foyer.</p>
South Worcestershire Nightstop	South Worcestershire Nightstop (up to four nights) and South Worcestershire Nightstop Plus (up to 8 weeks).
St Basils Home2Home Supported Lodgings Scheme	Hosts will provide a young person (16 to 21) with accommodation within their home and support them to develop all the necessary skills they will need to move on to independent living. Referrals can only be made by Children's Services.
Worcester YMCA Foyer	Accommodation based in Worcester City but countywide accommodation scheme.

Redditch Borough Council

Accommodation Schemes

Organisation	Provision
Redditch Borough Council	14 units of Furnished Self Contained Temporary Accommodation Units (including 2 units suitable to be used as training flats for young people)
St Basils Beoley Court	9 units of supported accommodation - self-contained bedsits and one bedroom flats up to age 23
Grange Court (Rooftop Housing Association)	24 units of move on accommodation for Young People available with floating support for those under 25 years of age.
Worcestershire Y.M.C.A. Redditch YMCA Gordon Anstis House 01527 61643	170 in 3 schemes one of which is exclusively for under 25's and consists of 52 bed spaces for people requiring on site support. Redditch BC have a nominations agreement in place with Redditch YMCA.
Bromford Corinthia	16 units with support needs specifically for young parents.

Smallwood Alms-houses	
Redditch Nightstop 01527 66036	Temporary overnight accommodation for young people in the homes of trained volunteers. The project covers Redditch and Bromsgrove. Referrals can be made Monday to Friday.
St Basils Home2Home Supported Lodgings Scheme	Hosts will provide a young person (16 to 21) with accommodation within their home and support them to develop all the necessary skills they will need to move on to independent living. Referrals can only be made by Children's Services.
Worcester YMCA Foyer	Accommodation based in Worcester City but countywide accommodation scheme.

Appendix 3 - Duty to Refer

Who has the duty to refer?

Various public authorities have the duty to refer but in relation to the County Council it is;

- a social services authority (adult social services, including 'no recourse' teams)
- a person who performs social services functions relating to children and childcare (children's social care)

What should be included in a referral?

The duty to refer is triggered if a public authority considers, or is made aware, that a person may be homeless or threatened with becoming homeless.

All referrals must include the following information:

- facts that can help to identify the person, for example: title, forename and surname
- age and/or date of birth
- gender
- ethnicity
- contact details, for example: current postal address, and/or a correspondence address / phone number (landline and/or mobile) / email address
- any other relevant contact information

Please include reason for referral, for example if the person is: homeless – for example sleeping rough in a place not designed for habitation, 'sofa surfing', squatting, sleeping on public transport or escaping domestic abuse, or if threatened with homelessness – for example due to leave prison, care, the armed forces or hospital, at risk of eviction from a landlord or lender, asked to leave by parents, relatives or friends, or given notice to leave accommodation provided by the National Asylum Support Service. This list is not exhaustive.

It is useful to know the following (where relevant to the case);

- whether the person wants help to apply / obtain for accommodation
- details of any other people who might live with the person being referred or if pregnant
- causes of homelessness
- housing and / or support needs
- any vulnerabilities the person (or anyone else who might live with them) might have, such as mental illness, learning disability, physical disability or sensory disability
- whether the person (or anyone else who might live with them) has previously been in care of a social services authority, prison, the armed forces or is escaping domestic abuse
- whether the person is employed in the area
- whether the person has family in the area
- how long the person has lived in the area.

When should a referral be made?

Public authorities should make a referral as soon as they become aware that a person is, or might be, homeless or threatened with homelessness. Local housing authorities should have arrangements in place to receive a referral seven days a week, 24-hours a day. It is important to emphasise that a referral can be sent when there is a possibility of homelessness, as there is no requirement for any certainty of this fact.

For Care Leavers the LGA guidance suggests up to 2 years prior to the anticipated date of leaving care but as a general rule it could also be when one or more of the following situations arise;

- person is sleeping rough or sofa surfing
- staying with parents, family and friends etc but with no permission to remain there
- the person has been served a valid notice to leave a property by a landlord or mortgage lender
- unable to remain in the accommodation due to affordability or poor property condition
- person experiencing violence or threats of violence.

Where should a referral be made to?

Public authorities must make a referral to a local housing authority of a person's choosing regardless of local connection as Housing Advice is available to all. However, some prevention and relief services are only available to households with a connection to a specific Local Housing Authority.

Officers can make a referral in a number of ways;

- via the Housing Partners "ALERT" system. Users can create individual accounts and then send referrals through to LHAs throughout England – this is the LA preference
- via email to the local Housing Advice Team. All councils have set up Duty To Refer email addresses in Worcestershire

DutyToRefer@wyreforestdc.gov.uk
dutytorefer@wychavon.gov.uk
dutytorefer@malvern hills.gov.uk
dutytorefer@worcester.gov.uk
dutytorefer@bromsgrove.gov.uk
dutytorefer@redditchbc.gov.uk

- via telephone call to the local Housing Advice Team
- via the website of each LHA

Appendix 4

Worcestershire Joint Protocol for Care Leavers Information Sharing Agreement (ISA)

Protocol Reference Number	ISPxxx
Version Number	V1.3
Version Date	01/03/2019
Author Name	Rhys Davies
Owner Name	Tina Russell
Review Date	01/09/2020
File Location	U:\U252 Cross Working\SU0104 IG Group\01 Information Sharing Survey\ISPs

All organisations signing up to this Information Sharing Agreement (ISA) agree to the following general principles of Information Governance. These principles provide a framework for safeguarding the processing of data and information as defined by the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Worcestershire Partners have signed up to the [Worcestershire Data Sharing Charter](#), outlining the overarching aims of data sharing to benefit Worcestershire residents.

General Principles

1. All signatories to this ISA agree to process personal information in accordance with their organisation's information governance policies and procedures, or as directed by the standards applicable to the information being processed.
2. Organisations are expected to identify and use appropriate information assurance framework¹ and will commit to complying with the relevant standards within that regime and sharing the evidence of attainment and any associated action plans on request with ISG partner organisations.
3. Each organisation shall have appointed a responsible / accountable officer who will ensure the protection of personal information for example a Caldicott Guardian, Data Protection Officer or a Senior Manager responsible for data protection.
4. Each organisation will be take appropriate organisational and technical

¹ Appropriate information assurance framework for example Data Security and Protection Toolkit, ISO 27001, Public Service Network (PSN), Cyber Essentials Plus

measures towards compliance with Data Protection Act 2018, Caldicott Principles, ISO 27001 Series of Information Security Standards, Freedom of Information Act 2000 and national guidance and rules around processing personal confidential information and other relevant legislation.

5. Each organisation is committed to identifying, documenting and risk assessing their data flows with any mitigating actions defined and agreed.
6. Each organisation is committed to ensuring staff are appropriately trained and comply with organisational policies in relation to Information Governance, including Data Protection, Confidentiality, Caldicott Principles, Data Security, Records Management and Freedom of Information.
7. Organisations will promptly notify other partner organisations of any Information Governance breach, vulnerability or threat that could affect the security of the data being shared.
8. Organisations will agree, security clearances permitting, to allow partner or lead organisations, or its representatives, to carry out audits or visits to confirm compliance with agreed assurance requirements.
9. Each organisation commits to ensure that the data is shared in a safe and secure manner meeting the agreed purpose of the sharing and protecting the rights and freedoms of individuals.
10. Any requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or the Data Protection Act 2018 should be directed to the original organisation's FOIA Officer / Data Protection Officer.
11. Organisations may not create or establish onward sharing or sharing for an additional purpose without having first established a lawful basis for doing so and having the agreement of the original data controller.

Data Flow Details

Data Flow	Worcestershire Joint Protocol for Care Leavers
Organisations involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worcestershire County Council (WCC) • Worcestershire Children First (from 1 October 2019) (WCF) • Malvern Hills District Council (LHA) • Worcester City Council (LHA) • Wyre Forest District Council (LHA) • Wychavon District Council (LHA) • Bromsgrove District Council (LHA) • Redditch Borough Council (LHA) • BDHT Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (LHA)
Purpose of sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To best meet the young persons needs, effectively discharge Local Housing Authorities or WCC duties in line with legislation and good practice, ensuring there are no gaps in service and that resources are effectively used

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To prevent young people from becoming homeless • A commitment to deliver a 'corporate parenting approach' for Looked After Children to ensure young people achieve the best outcomes possible • Both WCC / WCF and Local Housing Authorities have statutory duties towards 16 and 17 year olds. In some cases they will both have a responsibility towards a young person and need to work together in order to ensure an appropriate combination of accommodation and support is arranged to assist the young person to successfully live independently • Collecting and analysing data regarding young people which can be used to inform future strategy and commissioning across Worcestershire • A reduced risk of young people being passed between statutory bodies and other agencies and falling through the net and therefore becoming at risk of rough sleeping, exploitation and other safeguards young people are entitled to being ignored or neglected
Direction of data flow	Between WCC / WCF and LHA (Local Housing Association)
Process for sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal meetings – including the monthly Housing Panel meetings between LHA and WCC officers • Secure email • Shared spreadsheets • Telephone conversations between officers
Legal Gateway for sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Children Act 1989 • The Children Act 2004 • Housing Act 1996 • Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 • The Homelessness Act 2002 • The Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002
Information being shared - outline	Background about a young person and identifying support needs and housing options {Outline the information to be shared}
Personal data to be shared	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Address <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Age <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Date of Birth <input type="checkbox"/> Driving Licence Number <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Email Address <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Health data <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Home Phone Number <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Income / Financial / Tax Situation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Living Habits <input type="checkbox"/> Location Data (Travel / GDPS / GSM Data) <input type="checkbox"/> Login / Username <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Marital Status

	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mobile Phone Number <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Name <input type="checkbox"/> NHS Number <input type="checkbox"/> National Insurance Number <input type="checkbox"/> Online Identifier e.g. IP Address <input type="checkbox"/> Other General Identifier <input type="checkbox"/> Photograph <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Description <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Postcode <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sex <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social care information <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Work Related Training / Awards <input type="checkbox"/> Other personal data (please state)
Legal Basis for Processing Personal Data	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Data Subject's consent for the purpose <input type="checkbox"/> Necessary for a contract with the Data Subject <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Necessary to comply with a legal obligation <input type="checkbox"/> Necessary to protect the vital interests of an individual(s) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Necessary for a task in the public interest or exercise of official authority of Controller <input type="checkbox"/> Necessary for legitimate interests of Controller unless interests are overridden by the interests or rights of the individual (only available in limited circumstances to public bodies)
Special Category Personal Data to be shared	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Race <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ethnic origin <input type="checkbox"/> Politics <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion <input type="checkbox"/> Trade union membership <input type="checkbox"/> Genetics <input type="checkbox"/> Biometrics (where used for id purposes) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Health <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sex life or sexual orientation <input type="checkbox"/> None
Legal Basis for Processing Special Category Personal Data	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Data Subject's explicit consent for the purpose <input type="checkbox"/> Necessary for obligations under employment, social security or social protection law or a collective agreement* <input type="checkbox"/> Necessary to protect the vital interests of a Data Subject who is incapable of giving consent <input type="checkbox"/> Carried out by a not-for-profit organisation and does not involve disclosing personal data to a third party without consent <input type="checkbox"/> Manifestly made public by actions taken by the individual

	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Necessary for establishing, exercising, or defending legal claims or where courts are acting in judicial capacity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Necessary for substantial public interest proportionate to aim pursued and with appropriate safeguarding measures [‡] <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Necessary for health or social care purposes <input type="checkbox"/> Necessary for public health purposes* <input type="checkbox"/> Necessary for archive purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes, or statistical purposes*
How information will be stored and used	<p>WCC / WCF will store the information on the social care system (FWI / LiquidLogic) Information presented at Housing Panel meetings to discuss the housing needs and options of individual young people LHA will store the information on either HomeChoice Plus System, Housing Jigsaw Civca Sytem and PRAH system (for housing providers).</p>
Retention of information	<p>Social Care retain information in line with the WCC / WCF Disposal Schedule for children's services records as this information forms part of the young person's social care record and follows that retention criteria and the WCC / WCF data protection policy LHA retain information for 3 years</p>
Agreed by	<p>Tina Russell, Assistant Director, Safeguarding Services Worcestershire County Council {Name} Worcestershire Children First (from 1 October 2019)</p> <p>{Name} Malvern Hills District Council</p> <p>{Name} Worcester City Council</p> <p>{Name} Wyre Forest District Council</p> <p>{Name} Wychavon District Council</p> <p>{Name} Bromsgrove District Council</p> <p>{Name} Redditch Borough Council</p> <p>{Name} BDHT Bromsgrove District Housing Trust</p>

* Additional conditions need to be met detailed in DPA 2018 Schedule 1 part 1

≠ • Specific 'substantial public interest' conditions are in DPA 2018 Schedule 1 part 2

Appendix 5

Version History		
Version	Date	Description
V1.00	27/02/13	Worcestershire Protocol for Care Leavers revised and added to Worcestershire's Joint Protocol for Homeless 16/17 Year olds V1.04 on 31/07/13
V1.1	28/09/17	Comprehensive revision in response to Worcestershire's Care Leaver's Strategy 2017-2019
V1.2	01/08/2018	Annual Revision with updates in respect of the Homeless Reduction Act