

Joint Housing Protocol

for

Care Leavers in Thurrock

**Housing Protocol for Care Leavers who are in
need of housing and tenancy related support**

INTRODUCTION

Young people will have different emotions about leaving care and living independently. Some young people are excited about branching out on their own, taking the first steps to being fully independent. Some young people will be anxious about where they will live, some are nervous about living on their own, some are afraid they will be lonely and some young people will experience a mixture of all these feelings.

Thurrock Council are Corporate Parents for our young people who are leaving care and embarking on the journey to independence. Corporate parenting means local authorities doing the most they can for looked after children and care leavers, to give them the same opportunities as other children and promote the best possible outcomes for them.

Children's Social Care and the Housing Solutions Service have statutory duties to young people leaving our care, and other statutory and voluntary agencies provide a range of services to support them.

The purpose of this protocol is to set out how Thurrock Council, Children's Services and Housing Services will work together to provide an effective, consistent and co-ordinated response to Care Leavers in order to meet their housing and support needs and help them get the best start in life.

As well as setting out the roles, responsibilities and arrangements for achieving planned supportive transitions to independent living for Children's Social Care and Housing Service, this protocol will help to promote and safeguard the wellbeing of young people, ensuring that, when young people are ready to live independently, their housing needs are met and that they have the skills, knowledge, help and support to sustain their tenancies.

1. YOUNG PEOPLE AFFECTED BY THIS PROTOCOL

This protocol relates to young people who are owed a duty by Thurrock Council under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

The purpose of the Act is to ensure that young people do not leave care until they are ready and that, when they have left care, they receive the support they require.

Under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, Children's Social Care has a duty towards 'Eligible', 'Relevant' and 'Former Relevant' children and a duty to provide support which includes appropriate housing (see **Appendix A** for definitions).

The [DfE Statutory guidance](#) on applying corporate parenting principles to looked after children and care leavers stresses the importance of joint working in supporting care leavers to navigate their way through the transition to adulthood:

Good preparation, a gradual transition and flexible ongoing support are key to helping care leavers achieve a successful move to independent living. Effective and proactive local authorities establish joint working arrangements between children's services, housing and other specialist services to help care leavers prepare for the realities of living independently, involve them in planning and decisions about their housing options, ensure suitable housing and support is in place, and are ready to respond with contingency arrangements if things do go wrong. (Applying corporate parenting principles to looked after children and care leavers - Chapter 2).

In Thurrock, around 80 young people, aged 16 or 17, are accommodated by Thurrock Children's Social Care are eligible for a care leaving service and will require support to access appropriate independent accommodation at the age of 18. There are also a number of young people (living in independent or supported housing, or remaining with foster carers under a Staying Put arrangement) who are aged 18 – 25, being supported by Children's Social Care and will, at some time, want to live independently and will require their own home.

2. SIGNATORIES TO THIS PROTOCOL

This Protocol has been developed and agreed by Thurrock Council Children's Social Care and Housing Solutions Service. It describes the joint working arrangements that have been agreed to ensure that, in Thurrock we provide a consistent and co-ordinated response to care leavers, including Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC), who are in need of accommodation and tenancy related support.

3. A CONSISTENT, CO-ORDINATED RESPONSE

It is essential that Children's Social Care and the Housing Solutions Service play a full and active role in assessing, assisting, and supporting care leavers, and that the housing needs of care leavers are addressed and planned for before the young person leaves care.

In order to meet care leavers' housing and support needs, Children's Social Care and Housing Services must work collaboratively and proactively with housing and

support providers to ensure an adequate range and supply of accommodation to meet the assessed needs of relevant children and other care leavers.

Children's Social Care will actively encourage young people to remain in a care setting until they are ready to live independently and will ensure that, by the time the young person is ready to leave care, they have acquired the vital skills and provided with additional support to successfully manage tenancies and live independently.

The objective is to find the most suitable accommodation for Care Leavers. This includes confirming that it is appropriate to each young person's individual circumstances and needs and that if social rented housing is required, the young person is supported to submit a housing application early enough to be offered housing when they are ready to live independently.

This Protocol aims to build upon existing good practice and will:

- Improve the way in which care leavers experience the transition from being "looked after to independence and how they are referred to, and access housing and support services
- Improve working relationships between organisations and assist their understanding of one another's roles and responsibilities
- Ensure that Thurrock Council meets its statutory duties towards care leavers
- Standardise processes and procedures that are easy to follow
- Achieve greater consistency with support plans and access to services
- Fully utilise the skills, knowledge and resources of Children's Social Care and Housing Services in order to deliver effective and sustainable solutions for care leavers

4. PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING THIS PROTOCOL

All of the signatories to this Protocol have agreed the following principles:

- The safety and welfare of the young person leaving care is paramount
- Every effort will be made through a joined-up response to identify homelessness risk early and act to prevent it through early intervention and effective multi agency working providing a quick, safe, joined up response for

care leavers who do become homeless

- Agencies will work together to assess and meet the needs of care leavers, and they will share information effectively
- Young people leaving care will be kept informed of all progress and decisions made
- Where a care leaver is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, a lead professional will work with them. This will be their personal advisor
- Bed and Breakfast accommodation will not be used to house any 16- and 17-year-olds. Children's services have a duty alongside housing and will therefore ensure they are provided with suitable accommodation that meets their needs

Support to young people will be in line with the [Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Framework](#) . There are five stages to the framework which reflect the journey of a young person as they leave care

- Training young people on tenancies and the housing market
- Involving young people in planning their accommodation
- Reducing the housing crisis by having emergency options
- Commissioning of a wide range of housing types
- Developing skills and confidence ahead of a move to independent living

5. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW OF THIS PROTOCOL

To ensure that it remains relevant and effective, this Protocol will be reviewed 6 months after the date that it comes into effect, and then annually.

Children's Social Care will initiate the review and will be responsible alongside Housing colleagues for the monitoring and evaluation of the Protocol. If there are any changes to roles and responsibilities, the Protocol will be reviewed, amended and agreed by all parties.

Organisations and services involved with this Protocol are asked to provide feedback and performance information that can be collated and shared to improve services and inform and support collective commissioning intentions in Thurrock.

The Protocol can also help gather evidence to show, for example, the number of care leavers in Thurrock who are at risk of or homeless or in need of housing, and the number of care leavers whose tenancies break down. This evidence may highlight the need for new services and/or the remodelling or replacement of existing services.

6. WORKING TOGETHER TO ASSESS AND MEET THE HOUSING AND SUPPORT NEEDS OF CARE LEAVERS

The success of this Protocol is dependent on the efficient and effective sharing of information between organisations.

In order to accurately assess and meet a young person's needs, information relevant to their housing and support needs must be shared between Children's Social Care, Housing Solutions and housing support providers.

The young person's written permission must be sought before the exchange of information can take place and this permission should be obtained at the earliest opportunity and forwarded to the Housing Solutions Service for their records as part of the young person's application for housing.

Not all of the information in the young person's Pathway Plan is relevant to their housing application. However, it is expected that the care leaver will give their permission for all **relevant** information to be shared. The Personal Advisor will seek this permission and share the appropriate sections of the pathway plan with Housing Solutions.

Children's Social Care will share information about care leavers for the purpose of identifying and referring those young people and facilitating the subsequent joint assessment of their accommodation and support needs. Children's Social Care and the Housing Solutions Service will share general information in order to support the review and evaluation of the effectiveness of the Protocol.

Although all care leavers must be asked for their permission to have their details shared – and may withdraw their permission at any time – all staff need to be aware of their information sharing obligations in relation to the safeguarding of young people and be familiar with national guidance.

All information sharing must comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018, Thurrock Council's Information Sharing Protocol and the relevant Housing procedures in respect of confidentiality of information.

7. THE PATHWAY PLAN

The young person's Pathway Plan will identify their housing and support needs and what action is required in order to prepare the young person for independent living.

The Pathway Plan must reflect the young person's current circumstances, provide a clear analysis of the needs of the young person and set out how these needs will be met.

When Children's Social Care completes the Housing Referral Form (now included in the Pathway Plan), with the young person a copy of the relevant section(s) of the Pathway Plan will be attached and the team will work collaboratively and proactively with the Housing Allocations Team to ensure that the young person's needs and circumstances are fully understood and reflected in the Housing Needs Assessment.

The information in the Pathway Plan and Housing Needs Assessment will inform the multi-agency approach that Children's Social Care, the Housing Solutions Service and other housing and support providers will adopt in meeting the young person's housing needs.

This multi-agency assessment will identify the specific needs of the young person and will be informed, as appropriate, by meetings with all parties including the young person.

8. PREPARING CARE LEAVERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

Children's Social Care will actively encourage young people to remain in a protective environment until they have developed appropriate life skills, at their own pace, and are ready to move to independent accommodation, rather than at a specific age.

There is a lot that can be done to prepare young people, emotionally and practically, for independence and managing on their own. Social Workers and Personal Advisers will help young people to make informed choices about the type of accommodation that is best suited to them and the nature of the support they will need in order to sustain it.

The Social Work and After Care Teams will work alongside each young person to help them plan for their future, help them develop confidence in their ability to live independently, and help them develop the skills required to successfully maintain their own tenancy. This work will be recorded in the young person's Pathway Plan.

9. HOUSING OPTIONS FOR CARE LEAVERS

Thurrock Housing Protocol (Care Leavers)

June 2023

When a young person reaches the age of 18 years they are no longer 'in care' and they can access their own accommodation and hold a tenancy. Childrens Social Care's duty to provide the care leaver with regulated accommodation will end when the young person reaches the age of 18.

There is a need to review individual young people's needs through the pathway plan and to ensure appropriate oversight of accommodation support. As every young person develops at their own pace, and some young people will need more time than others, it is not assumed that all young people will be ready to live independently when they reach the age of 18.

Depending on whether or not the young person is ready to live independently, there are a number of accommodation options available to young people who are aged 18 or over including:

- Remaining with former foster carers under a Staying Put arrangement
- Moving into supported accommodation (including but not limited to 'Headstart Housing')
- Moving into social rented housing
- Moving into other independent living situations such as shared accommodation with other young people.
- If the young person requires it, appropriately registered accommodation supported by Adult Social Care (e.g. CQC registered provision)
- Shared Lives arrangements and;
- Where a young person remains in full time education or is at University. Children's Social Care will support the young person to access adequate funds to secure accommodation suitable to their needs during term time and will support them to access accommodation during the holiday periods.

For those young people who are aged 18 or over and are not yet ready for independent living, remaining with former foster carers or moving into supported housing may offer the best options for meeting their housing and support needs.

It is important, however, that Children's Social Care sends a Housing Referral Form to the Housing Allocations Team as soon as it is agreed that the young person will join the local Housing Register. For some children a referral will be completed as part of the pre-18 pathway plan.

Where an application is to be made for social rented housing, Housing Allocations will liaise with Children's Social Care and the young person to discuss the young person's housing options, the applications process and how social rented housing is allocated. As well as helping the young person to apply for housing, the Housing Service will monitor and oversee the rehousing process to ensure that a suitable offer is made on time.

Remaining with former foster carers (Staying Put)

Some young people may wish to remain living with their foster carer(s) when they reach the age of 18 and are no longer 'in care'.

A 'Staying Put' arrangement is only possible if the young person and foster carer are both happy with it – and it is essential that both parties understand the implications of the agreement they are entering into. Staying Put can provide the young person with the time they need to improve their independent living skills or complete their studies.

Moving into supported housing

Some care leavers will need supported housing to meet their needs. Supported housing is provided in various forms, ranging from shared houses or flats (where young people share all or some of the facilities) to supported housing schemes where young people live together, but may have their own flat) and individual, self-contained flats and houses. Residents of supported housing are provided with on-site or floating support.

During their stay in supported housing, the young person is able to practice budgeting, cooking, cleaning and maintaining daily routines. Support that they will receive will be included in their support plan and Pathway Plan.

The experience of living in supported housing plays an important role in building the young person's confidence and ensuring that they are prepared and ready for independent living when they move into their own accommodation. It also helps Children's Social Care to identify any specific needs that the young person has and to determine how these needs can best be addressed and met.

Moving into social rented housing

For some care leavers, social housing will represent the most appropriate housing option when they are ready for independent living. In order to be allocated a property, the young person will need to complete a housing application and join the local Housing Register. They will also need to arrange for Children's Social Care to

provide the Allocations Team with confirmation that they are ready for independent living.

Thurrock Council operates a choice based lettings system guided by the Housing Allocations Policy. (See **Appendix D**). The policy recognises care leavers as a priority group and awards a reasonably high priority.

10. APPLYING FOR SOCIAL RENTED PROPERTY

Although care leavers can make a housing application without the active involvement of Children's Social Care or Housing Solutions Services, one of the primary objectives of this Protocol is to ensure that care leavers who require social housing are offered suitable accommodation at the time they need it and are provided with all of the advice, help and support they require in order to successfully manage and sustain their tenancies.

Housing Allocations and Children's Social Care have therefore agreed that, when a care leaver requires social rented housing, Children's Social Care will complete the online housing register application with the young person. This will be followed by a completed referral form (integrated into the Pathway Plan) and e-mail it to the Allocations Team mailbox housingreg@thurrock.gov.uk

Within 5 working days of receiving the Housing Referral Form, the Allocations Team will confirm its receipt, review its contents, request any additional information or documentation that is needed, and confirm the approval.

Care leavers will be actively encouraged to agree to the involvement and support of the After Care Team in their housing application. A young person will normally only receive an offer of social housing where it is assessed that they are ready for independent living and the young person's prospective landlord is satisfied that they are going to be able to comply with their tenancy conditions.

The services will work together in the best interests of the young person and ensure that the decisions made by Housing regarding care leavers is fair and reasonable.

The Allocations Officer will ensure that:

- The young person has made an online housing application
- All supporting evidence has been provided and the young Person's housing application has been registered, assessed and verified
- The young person is eligible and qualifies for social housing

- Children's Social Care has provided written confirmation of whether or not the young person is ready for independent living and, if they are not yet ready, when they are likely to be ready

Until there is confidence that the care leaver is ready for independent living, the young person will not be actively considered for an offer of housing and they will not be able to bid for housing through the choice based lettings scheme.

11. Working Together to sustain tenancies for Care Leavers

In order to ensure that care leavers get the best start in life and achieve a smooth transition to independent living, it is essential that Children's Social Care, the local Housing Service and other social landlords communicate well, work proactively and collaboratively to sustain the tenancies of young people. They will also ensure that the young person is supported in applying for benefits or the housing element of universal credit where appropriate.

Before a care leaver is rehoused, Children's Social Care and Housing will ensure that the young person is aware of their tenancy obligations such as paying the rent and service charges, keeping the property in a good and clean condition, and behaving in a reasonable manner and that they understand the likely consequences of breaching their tenancy conditions.

As part of their preparations for independent living, a care leaver will have a bank account, a birth certificate, a passport and National Insurance Number.

How social rented housing is allocated

When there is shared understanding that a care leaver is ready for independent living, the application will be verified and made active on the Housing Register. This means that, from that point onwards, the care leaver will be actively considered for any suitable social rented housing that becomes available.

Thurrock operate a choice based lettings scheme and advertise most of the vacant social rented housing on the internet. Except where it is decided that a property should be offered to an applicant as a 'direct let', housing applicants will normally only be considered for a property if they are suitable for it and if they 'bid' for it. A shortlist will be compiled of the 'bidders' with the highest priority.

The applicant at the top of the shortlist will be invited to view the property. If it is a housing association home, applicants at the top of the shortlist will be nominated to the housing association which will then invite them to a viewing.

When a care leaver is shortlisted for social rented housing, they will be invited (with Thurrock Housing Protocol (Care Leavers)

their allocated Social Worker or Personal Advisor) to an accompanied viewing of the property which will be undertaken by the social landlord's Housing Officer or Lettings Officer.

During the accompanied viewing, the young person and their Social Worker or Personal Advisor will receive a guided tour of the accommodation, will be briefed on the landlord's expectations and conditions of tenancy (including the rent and service charges), will be told about local facilities and services, and will have the opportunity to ask questions. After the viewing, the care leaver will decide whether or not the property is suitable.

Benefits and Young People's Contributions:

Young people who are Care Leavers are expected to fund their rent/housing costs through their income. To that end Personal Advisors should ensure young people have claimed all relevant benefits alongside any income they receive from work.

An application for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support should be completed if the young person is unemployed or receiving a low income. Universal Credit awards contain a housing costs element which helps with rent and potential service charges.

The Care Leavers Council Tax Discount will be applied automatically. If this does not apply the Personal Advisor should ensure any single person discount is applied for and the criteria for any other council tax exemption is checked (e.g. student occupation). A requirement of receiving the Care Leavers Council Tax Discount is that any other reductions the young person may be entitled to have been applied for.

Where young people are required to make a contribution to their post 18 placement (e.g. in a 'staying put' arrangement) and required to make a contribution to the placement it should follow the following formula up to age 25:

Young people in arrears

Living independently is challenging for all young people due to the high costs of living and relatively low incomes that they can obtain. Rent arrears in any form of tenure are a real risk and it is important that the signs that a care leaver is struggling are identified at an early stage. The Rental Income Team will advise the After care Team Manager via aftercare@thurrock.gov.uk and Personal Advisor when arrears reach £300 so that action can be taken to jointly engage with the young person and put in place steps to reduce the debt.

Some young people may have multiple debts and it is important that they are referred to relevant debt advice services to help them manage their finances. Cases that are more complex and are at risk of possession action will be taken to the

Tenancy Management Panel to agree joint action plans to try and prevent escalation of eviction proceedings.

Young people at imminent risk of homelessness

Homelessness should be avoided through working together. No young person should be evicted from their home without it being clear what action has taken place to prevent this by all parties and what the subsequent plan is. If any care leaver makes a homelessness application, the Housing Solutions Service will inform the After Care Team, investigate the reasons for the young person's homelessness and decide whether or not the care leaver is owed a housing duty under the homelessness legislation. If it decides that the young person has caused their homelessness, the Housing Solutions Service will normally only be required to accommodate them for a period of up to 28 days.

If the care leaver is found to be intentionally homeless, a copy of the decision letter will be sent to the After Care Team and the young person's Pathway Plan will be updated. The After Care Team will work proactively with the young person and the Housing Solutions Team to prevent eviction or homelessness.

Consideration will be given to the reasons why the care leaver has been evicted and the support that was put in place prior to them losing their home. If such a decision is to be made it can result in any rehousing duty being discharged and will therefore require the authorisation of a Strategic Lead to ensure that such a decision is balanced and references the vulnerabilities and support needs of the young person.

Refusing an offer of accommodation:

If a young person feels that the property allocated to them is not suitable, they should mention this to the housing officer at the time of the viewing, but should accept the offer of accommodation and request a review of suitability of accommodation. This will ensure that if the review goes against them, they still have a home. If they refuse the offer, and request a review which goes against them, they will not be made another offer of accommodation, and may be without a home. This is a situation that both Housing and Children's Social Care would like to avoid.

The young person will be provided with support to address concerns regarding the accommodation, where the review decision is that the property offered to the young person is a suitable and reasonable offer.

Before the social landlord is able to provide the care leaver with a formal offer of tenancy, it will need to be satisfied that the young person is ready for independent living and will be able to successfully manage and sustain their tenancy.

In order to satisfy the social landlord that the care leaver is ready, Children's Social
Thurrock Housing Protocol (Care Leavers)

Care will ensure that the support identified in the young person's Pathway Plan is in place and it will specify exactly who is responsible for providing the support and how it will be reviewed. It will also share with the social landlord the relevant parts of the Pathway Plan.

Signing the tenancy agreement

When the social landlord is satisfied that the care leaver is ready to take on the tenancy an appointment will be made to meet with the young person and their Social Worker or Personal Advisor to complete the tenancy 'sign up'.

During the interview, the social landlord's Housing Officer will describe the contents of the tenancy agreement, the care leaver's rights and responsibilities as a tenant, and the likely consequences of any breach of the tenancy conditions. They will also provide the young person with their contact details and information about the social landlord's services.

As part of the 'sign up', the Housing Officer will normally help the care leaver to complete an application for Housing Benefit. Proof of identity, income and savings will be required.

During the interview, the care leaver's Social Worker or Personal Advisor with the young person will talk to the Housing Officer and agree the timing and frequency of the follow-up interviews and home visits that will be undertaken by Children's Social Care and the social landlord.

In order to ensure that the young person has settled in well, and to identify the need for any additional advice, help or support, Children's Social Care will visit the care leaver in their new home within 10 working days of them moving in. The Housing Officer will also visit (with Children's Social Care or on their own) within 4 weeks of their tenancy start date.

The exact timing and frequency of the follow-up interviews and home visits undertaken by Children's Social Care and the Housing Officer during the first 12 months of the care leaver's tenancy will depend on the specific needs and circumstances of the young person. However, during the first year, it is expected that Children's Social Care will meet with the care leaver in their home at least once every 8 weeks and the Housing Officer will meet with the care leaver in their home at least once every 12 weeks.

Help in setting up home

The more prepared that a young person is when leaving care, the more successful their move will be and the more confident they will become.

All care leavers are entitled to a Leaving Care Grant of £2,000 to help them set up home when they have secured an offer of independent accommodation. The grant can be used to purchase household furniture, bedding, a cooker, a fridge and other essential items. Although the money is not paid directly to the young person, their Personal Advisor will work with them to ensure that their needs are met.

When a care leaver has secured an offer of independent accommodation, their Social Worker or Personal Advisor will arrange for their 'Leaving Care Grant' monies in advance of the young person's tenancy start date.

12. Communication, joint working and problem solving

It is essential that, from the outset, Children's Social Care and the social landlord work proactively and collaboratively to support the care leaver in sustaining their tenancy.

Good communication, effective joint working and outcome focused problem solving will all play a vital role in ensuring that Children's Social Care and the social landlord are aware of any difficulties that the young person is having and are able to provide imaginative solutions to the problems they are experiencing.

During the tenancy 'sign up', the Social Worker / Personal Advisor and the Housing Officer will exchange their contact details and the contact details of their organisations. They will agree on the liaison arrangements and the timing and frequency of the follow-up interviews and home visits that will be undertaken by Children's Social Care and the social landlord.

As well as agreeing to work together to address any problems or concerns, Children's Social Care and the social landlord will agree to alert one another, at an early stage, if problems do occur or they are concerned about the care leaver's behaviour or wellbeing.

An early alert or referral will enable Children's Social Care and/or the social landlord to assess the care leaver's situation and work with them to address and resolve any problems before they become so serious as to put the young person's tenancy at risk.

It is the responsibility of Children's Social Care and the social landlord to work with care leavers, and with one another, to sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness. Possession proceedings should only ever be initiated after Children's Social Care has had the opportunity to meet with the tenant and landlord to try and resolve any problems and there has been concerted efforts made by each responsible agency to prevent this.

There may, on occasion, be disagreement between workers in Children's Services and officers in Housing or Revenues and Benefits on how the protocol is being administered or on how a young person is being advised and supported. If these cannot be resolved by team managers, then they should be escalated to the service managers for resolution. Lessons learnt will be shared with staff at the monthly joint housing meetings.

DEFINITION OF CARE LEAVERS

Definitions

The Local Authority has a duty towards eligible, relevant, former relevant and qualifying children:

- **Eligible children** a young person still in care aged 16 and 17 who have been looked after for (a total of) at least 13 weeks from the age of 14.
- **Relevant children** a young person aged 16 or 17 who have already left care, and who were looked after for (a total of) at least 13 weeks from the age of 14 and have been looked after at some time while 16 or 17.

The leaving care provisions of the Children Act require that relevant children are provided with, or maintained in, suitable accommodation unless the local authority is satisfied that their welfare does not require it. To be suitable, accommodation must be reasonably practicable for the young person given their needs and the local authority must be satisfied as to the suitability of any landlord. These arrangements should be detailed in the young person's active pathway plan.

Generally it would not be appropriate for 16 or 17 year olds to be given the responsibility of sustaining their own tenancy without appropriate support, nor would bed and breakfast accommodation be considered suitable

- **Former relevant children** a young person aged 18-25 who have been **eligible** and/or **relevant** children in care - young people who are looked after by a Local Authority either through a compulsory care order or remanded or accommodated by voluntary agreement including accommodation under section 20 of the Children Act.

Social services have a duty to assist a former relevant child, to the extent that their welfare or education/training requires it, by contributing to the expenses of living near the place where they are working, looking for work, or receiving education or training

- **Persons qualifying for advice and assistance** a person who is aged at least 16 but is under 25, with respect to whom a special guardianship order is in force (or was in force when they reached 18) and was looked after immediately before the making of that order, or at any time after reaching the age of 16 but while he was still a child was, but is no longer, looked after, accommodated or fostered

- **Vacation accommodation**

If a former relevant child is in full-time higher education or residential further education in accordance with their pathway plan, and their term-time accommodation is not available, the responsible authority has a duty to provide accommodation during vacations, or to pay the young person enough to secure accommodation for themselves. This could enable a care leaver to continue in education and not become homeless during the holidays. The duty continues for as long as they continue to pursue the course of education.

- **Staying Put arrangements**

Where a former relevant child and their local authority foster carer wish to continue to live together after the child ceases to be looked after, the responsible local authority has a duty to monitor any such 'staying put' arrangement, and to provide advice, assistance and support to enable the arrangement to continue.

LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

This provides a short summary of the provisions of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and Parts 6 & 7 of the Housing Act 1996¹, as amended).

The Leaving Care Act has two main aims:

1. To ensure that Young People do not leave care until they are ready.
 2. To ensure that they receive more effective support once they have left.
- Young people's experience of leaving care should be properly planned and Care Leavers should not become homeless when they reach the age of 18 and should have a Housing Plan.
 - Young people should be properly prepared for independent living and the monitoring / support systems should be put in place to ensure that they are able to successfully manage and sustain their tenancies.
 - Young People leaving care should not become homeless from their social rented housing.

The following list of legislation informs the duties and responsibilities of the Local Authority:

- Housing Act 1996 - [Part 6 \(Allocations\)](#) and [Part 7 \(Homelessness\)](#), as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- [Homelessness \(Priority Need for Accommodation\) \(England\) Order 2002](#)
- [Children Act 1989](#)
- [Children \(Leaving Care\) Act 2000](#)
- [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#) - sections 1, 2 and 3

The following is a list of statutory guidance that this document refers to:

- [Homelessness code of guidance](#)
 - [Applying corporate parenting principles to looked after children and care leavers](#)
 - [Children Act 1989: care planning, placement and case review](#)
 - [Children Act 1989: transition to adulthood for care leavers](#)
 - [Local offer guidance](#)
-

Personal Housing Plan

Title	First name	Surname	DOB	Gender	NI number	Customer id

Dear

You attended the local authority and a personal assessment of your current housing circumstances was undertaken by on the because you have a housing need and approached the authority for assistance. As part of the assessment the local authority has taken into account:

- The circumstances causing your homelessness
- The housing needs of you and your household
- The type of accommodation your household requires
- Any support needs you or your household need to secure and retain accommodation

Set out below is the Personalised Housing Plan detailing the outcome of the assessment including steps that we discussed and the actions you, your Personal Advisor and the Housing team of the Local Authority will take in order to address your housing situation.

Basic assessment information

From our basic assessment we believe your situation to be as follows:

- List of situational issues
-
-
-

Other agencies

This plan can be shown or shared with any other agencies/relatives/friends who are helping you so they are aware of your housing need and how the local authority is trying to assist you. The details below are the support needs identified as part of your assessment and who is providing support currently.

Support Needs	Agency/relative involved	Support being Offered	Date of Review

When is the customer likely to become homeless?

When you think you will become homeless (or threatened with homelessness):

Actions already taken

The action you have already taken to resolve your housing issues is:

-
-

Wishes to resolve your housing situation

Your wishes to resolve your housing situation:

e.g. Assistance with finding suitable accommodation

-
-
-

Actions/reasonable steps

We have agreed the following **Personal Housing Plan (PHP)** to help you remain in your current home or secure alternative accommodation. Please keep your allocated officer updated on what you have done. Your officer will also keep you updated.

What actions/reasonable steps the Housing Options Officer will do next:

Action type	Content	Date to be achieved	Date achieved

What actions/reasonable steps your Personal Advisor/After Care will take next:

Action type	Content	Date to be achieved	Date achieved

What actions/reasonable steps you need to take:

Action type	Content	Date to be achieved	Date achieved	Client accepted	Recommended or required

Leaflets/website information

Details of any leaflets / website information provided to you will be listed here:

-
-
-
-

Any other information/advice provided

Any other information / advice provided to you will be listed here:

-
-
-

Tailored Advice

This is tailored advice to support you.

-
-
-

Date PHP to be reviewed by Officer and Customer

Location	Date and time	With office	PA present Y/N

Appointments arranged

Any appointments arranged for you will be listed here:

Date..... Time..... Venue.....

A checklist of additional information required

Please provide documented proof of the following to the Council:

Type	Document	Household member	Date Provided

Agreement

The Personalised Housing Plan has been drawn up for both you and the council to carry out all the steps that have been agreed on the plan. You should make sure you attend any appointments that are arranged for you and take any action that you agreed to do on the plan. If you cannot do something that is on the plan then make sure you tell your Personal Advisor and Housing straight away and explain why you cannot do it.

We will review this plan on the (INSERT DATE) in order to evaluate the appropriateness of the plan and any steps recorded. If your circumstances change, for example you become homeless or your health needs change, then your Personalised Housing Plan will be reviewed. Make sure you inform your Personal Advisor and Housing Officer as soon as you are aware of any changes in your circumstances so that they can look at the plan with you again, agree new actions or add to the existing actions to be taken.

I (**INSERT NAME**) confirm that this is an accurate summary of my housing options interview and I understand the options available to me. I agree to the actions set out for both my household and the officer agree to take.

Customer signature:

Name:

Date:

Personal Advisor signature

Name:

Date:

Housing Options officer signature:

Name:

Date:

APPENDIX D

HOUSING ALLOCATIONS SCHEME

The link below provides the full details of the Housing Allocation Scheme;

<https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/sites/default/files/assets/documents/housing-allocation-scheme-v04.pdf>