



Northumberland
County Council

Joint Housing Protocol for Homeless 16/17 Yr Olds

Practitioners Quick Reference Guide

June 2020

Quick Reference Guide

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The Joint Housing protocol is an agreement that establishes the roles and responsibilities of different agencies towards homeless 16 and 17 year olds and promotes an effective assessment and meeting of the individual's needs.

For full procedural guidance, please refer to the Agency Guidance Notes. This quick reference guide enables front line staff to see at a glance the procedures for taking a young person through the protocol and clarifies which section of the paperwork they should complete at each stage. Agencies involved in the joint protocol are:

- Northumberland Adolescent Services
- Northumberland County Council Housing Service
- Early Help Services - NCC
- Youth Justice Service
- Youth Service - Specialist Early Help Provision
- Sorted Substance Misuse Services
- Northumberland Homefinder
- Northumberland Homes
- Supported Accommodation Providers

The Joint Housing Protocol process outlined in this guide has been updated to reflect updated Statutory Guidance in relation to homeless 16 and 17 year olds – The Prevention of homelessness and provision of accommodation for 16 and 17 year old young people who may be homeless and/or require accommodation (April 2018) which further clarifies responsibilities towards homeless 16 and 17 year olds.

More detail can be found in the comprehensive Agency Guidance Notes.

How are Referrals Made?

All **homeless** 16 and 17 year olds (except for those still in Year 11) will be referred to the NAS for an assessment of their needs and access to emergency accommodation (where necessary).

In practice, this means that should a young person present as homeless to an Early Help service, Supported Accommodation Providers, Housing, The Youth Service, Sorted or the Youth Justice Service – these agencies should undertake initial enquiries with the young person's family to determine that the young person is actually homeless and that they are unable to return home with the provision of support from other services.

Where services are satisfied that the young person has no option to return home at that moment in time, then a referral should be made to the First Contact for support from NAS 14+ Team, if the young person is not currently open to the Children's Services. As a matter of good practice, discussions should take place with the Team Manager from the 14+ Team to determine where support best sits prior to a referral being made to First Contact.

For those young people who are not immediately homeless or those wanting to access a planned move out of the family home with support from family; they are able to present to any of the above agencies for support around accessing accommodation.

However, for those that have applied directly to supported accommodation or to Northumberland Homefinder – there is an expectation that these providers will make a referral to First Contact for the referral to be screened and either forwarded to an early help service or to NAS to instigate a Joint Protocol meeting.

Early Help Assessment

The aim of the Early Help Assessment is to identify and meet the immediate needs of the young person whilst ensuring he/she is engaged in the assessment process, which will enable his/her needs to be assessed and appropriate mechanisms put in place for support and accommodation.

The Early Help Assessment incorporates information on the young person's situation and past experiences. It will highlight any additional needs the young person may have other than accommodation needs. The past history, support needs and accommodation needs of a young person all act as an indicator of the support services which may need to be involved. This will be carried out by the agency to which the young person presents.

This initial agency will retain lead responsibility for the young person during this first stage; unless there is an issue of immediate homelessness; resulting in the need for accommodation. As a matter of good practice, discussions should take place with the Team Manager from the 14+ Team to determine where support best sits prior to a referral being made to First Contact.

In these cases, a referral will be made to First Contact for assessment and accommodation to be provided by NAS.

The table below details the key elements of the Early Help Assessment and the agreed role of each partner agency in delivering its response. Wherever the young person presents as homeless, that agency takes overall responsibility for coordinating the involvement of other relevant agencies at the Early Help stage.

✓ Indicates agreed responsibility by agencies	Northumberland Adolescent Service (NAS)	Housing Service	Youth Justice Service	Sorted Substance Misuse Service	Youth Service - Early Help Provision	Early Help Service
1. Take referral and complete Early Help Assessment form/ Out of Court Disposal Assessment		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. Make immediate contact with young person's family to explore options for young person to return home and instigate a home visit (ideally the same day, if not possible within 24hrs)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
3. Where a young person is able to return home and issues are resolved by universal services, then no further action will be required under the Joint Protocol		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

4. Where a young person is able to return home but on-going issues remain in the home and there is a potential for the young person to become homeless – then a Joint Protocol Panel Meeting should be called by the service working with the young person and the accommodation service, Housing & other other service working with the young person will be invited to determine on-going support	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5. If young person is unable to return home – then referral needs to be made to the First Contact to request accommodation and assessment by the NAS; following discussions with 14+ Team Manager. NAS duty officers to be made aware of the referral and need for accommodation		Liaise with NAS Accommodation Service	Liaise with NAS Accommodation Service	Liaise with NAS Accommodation Service	Liaise with NAS Accommodation Service	Liaise with NAS Accommodation Service
6. NAS will undertake a follow up home visit to determine if young person can be returned home with support (joint visit may be undertaken with partner agencies or Northumberland Families First Team)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7. Where it has been confirmed by NAS that the young person is unable to return home, emergency	✓					

accommodation will be arranged for the young person						
<p>8. Where a young person is unable to return home and the need for accommodation extends beyond 24hrs – the young person needs to be consulted on their wishes about being accommodated under Sec 20 of the Children’s Act</p> <p>Independent advice should be provided to the young person about what it means to be “looked after” under Sec 20</p> <p>Where a Young person is agreeable to being accommodated under Sec 20 – NAS will provide weekly income maintenance payments to the young person and accept responsibility for the young person’s accommodation costs whilst the assessment is on-going and work is undertaken to rehabilitate the young person home</p>	<p>Referral to the Advocate within the Youth Service to be discussed with young person</p> <p>✓</p>	Liaise with NAS	Liaise with NAS	Liaise with NAS	Liaise with NAS	Liaise with NAS
9. Where a young person has declined to be accommodated under Sec 20, further discussion should take place with the young person about being supported as a “child in need” under Sec 17.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

If a young person is agreeable to Sec 17 support, they should be assisted to make a claim for DWP benefits and a claim for Housing Benefit made to cover the costs of their supported accommodation rent. The accommodation service will meet the costs associated with the support element of any placement identified						
9. Where a young person refuses support from NAS – a Joint Protocol meeting should be called to determine which agency is best suited to support the young person	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

In order for the protocol to work effectively **it is imperative** that responsibility should not be passed between agencies unless specified above.

1. Referral and Early Help Assessment

Action	Paperwork
Inform young person of process	YP information
Explain confidentiality, sharing of information and estrangement rule	YP guide
Complete Early Help Assessment form or OOCd Assessment for the Youth Justice Service as comprehensively as possible.	Early Help Assessment Form/OOCd assessment

Make immediate contact with family to explore return home options with a home visit being arranged the same day, wherever possible or within 24hrs if not.	Early Help Assessment Form/OOCD Assessment
Contact First Contact to see if a previous TAF or Early Help Assessment has been completed and identify if there is a lead professional	Record information on the Early Help Referral Form/OOCD Assessment
Ensure Young person consents to the assessment and record on the Early Help Referral form as appropriate.	Early Help Referral/OOCD Assessment

2. Contact Family

Action
You should contact the family to explore options for a return home, where no risk to the young person is present and arrange a home visit the same day, wherever possible (NAS Duty Officer may be able to undertake a joint visit with you).
Where a young person is able to return home – consideration should be given as to whether on-going support is required to maintain the young person at home; through the use of targeted and universal services (i.e. Early Help Services, Northumberland Families First)
Where a young person has returned home – a Joint Protocol Panel Meeting is not required

3. Arrange Emergency Accommodation

Action	Paperwork
Contact family (where safe) to explore options for temporary stay	
Contact other family members to explore options	
Where a young person is unable to return home and nowhere safe to reside (i.e. extended family) a referral needs to be made to First Contact to advise of the homelessness issue	

Referral will be forwarded to NAS to arrange emergency accommodation for the young person (Services are requested to also contact the NAS Duty Officer to make them aware of the referral - Referrer will be required to complete an accommodation referral form)
You will be required to support the young person to get to the emergency accommodation
Where emergency accommodation goes beyond 24hrs – NAS will seek the young person's wishes and feelings re being accommodated under Sec 20 of the Children Act whilst a C&F assessment is carried out and work is undertaken to rehabilitate the young person home

4. Young Person Unable to Return Home

Action	Paperwork
Where a young person is unable to return home immediately, NAS will undertake an assessment of the young person's needs (with their agreement)	C&F Assessment
Where emergency accommodation goes beyond 24hrs – NAS will seek the young person's wishes and feelings re being accommodated under Sec 20 of the Children Act whilst a C&F assessment is carried out and work is undertaken to rehabilitate the young person home	
Where a young person is agreeable to being accommodated under Sec 20 – YPS will seek Strategic Management Approval	CLA Request For a Child to be Looked After
Where a young person is not agreeable to being accommodated under Sec 20, NAS will continue to support the young person under Sec 17 arrangements, completing a C&F assessment where young person is agreeable to this	
Where a young person is not agreeable to an assessment of their needs by NAS or the involvement of a social worker from the service, a Joint Protocol Meeting will be arranged and held to determine which agency is best suited to meet the needs of the young person	Early Help Referral

5. Young Person has returned home but there are on-going issues

Action	Paperwork
Where a young person is likely to become homeless despite returning home, then a JP panel Meeting should be held	Early Help Referral/OOCD Assessment

6. Living expenses

Action
If a young person is accommodated under Sec 20, then NAS will provide income maintenance to the young person on a weekly basis (equivalent of universal credit)
If a young person is not accommodated or declined to be accommodated, but is living away from the family home, they should be supported to make a claim for DWP benefits (i.e. universal credit)

7. Panel Meetings

Action	
Invite young person to the panel meeting	
Initial agency identifies others who need to be involved NAS, Early Help Services and Housing Services must be invited to every panel meeting	
Invite Lead professional (LP) to panel meeting if Team Around the Child/Family (TAC/TAF) process is current or has been previously registered)	
Copy of Early Help Referral form sent to agencies invited	
Initial agency convenes a panel meeting (At this meeting, agencies will decide on which of them should take lead responsibility from this point forward.	

Invite parents to the panel meeting as appropriate	
Initial agency chairs panel meeting unless agreed otherwise	
Record outcome of panel meeting, including whether a C&F assessment is required to be undertaken by NAS	
Copy meeting minutes and send to all invited parties	

8. Out of Hours

If a homeless 16 or 17year old person presents as homeless outside normal working hours they should be referred to the Emergency Duty Team via their out of hours emergency number. The EDT team is contactable after 5pm or at weekends on 01670 534 600.

9. Support

Action
The identified lead agency will work with the young person and other identified agencies to coordinate services and reach a satisfactory outcome for the young person
Referrals to be supported accommodation to be made as necessary - will require an accommodation referral to the the Accommodation Service with NAS

10. Review

The identified lead will review the case after an agreed length of time, ensuring all actions with the Family Plan are being undertaken and the support needs of the young person are being addressed.

11. What happens when a young person is not deemed to be homeless?

If a young person is not deemed to be a Child in Need and found not to be statutorily homeless then Housing Services has very limited duties owed to the young person. Equally, unless there were exceptional circumstances, NAS are unlikely to find the young person to be a child in need and therefore they too have limited duty owed to the young person.

It is envisaged that the most likely reason a young person is to be found not homeless will be that the parents/guardians will offer for the young person to return home. Clearly, child protection issues must be paramount in these cases and no young person will be expected to return to a potentially abusive situation.

If family relationships are not abusive but present a barrier to a return home. Support can be offered to the young person and their family through the use of universal and targeted services.

12. Concerns

Where disagreements occur about referrals, service provision or the conduct and behaviour of staff from another service, the individual staff member should discuss these in the first instance with their own line manager. The manager will then determine an appropriate course of action in the context of the disagreement, from a range of options.

- Providing effective supervision and support to the staff member to re-establish good working relationships or negotiate a compromise acceptable to both services
- Organising a meeting between line managers to re-establish good working relationships or negotiate a compromise acceptable to both services
- Discussing concerns with senior management to explore strategic solutions or compromise.

13. Referrals from Social Housing Providers

Where a young person has applied directly to a Social Housing Provider through Northumberland Homefinder for accommodation aged 16-17 years, all applications should be deferred pending the calling of a Joint Protocol Meeting.

It is essential to ensure that young people requesting accommodation have the appropriate support in place before accessing independent accommodation. In these instances, the social housing provider will make contact with First Contact to request an assessment of the young person's needs.

First Contact will forward this referral to either Early Help Services or NAS (depending on the level of need and whether a young person is homeless with immediate effect)—for the arrangement of a panel meeting.

The process around these particular cases will follow the same route as for other young people presenting as homeless. If at the meeting it is agreed that the young person is ready for independence, support will be put in place for the young person to access accommodation via the provider.

Where young people are accessing an independent tenancy, It is essential that staff from the Housing Provider attend this meeting to explain more about managing an independent tenancy.

NB: Where a young person is currently in accommodation with the provider but at risk of eviction; then a referral should be made to First Contact to advise of the situation and for a referral made to the most appropriate service to support the young person

14. Referrals from Supported Accommodation Providers

As with referrals from social housing providers, supported accommodation providers will contact First Contact in the first instance when a young person aged 16/17 years applies directly to them for accommodation. All applications should be deferred pending the calling of a Joint Protocol Meeting.

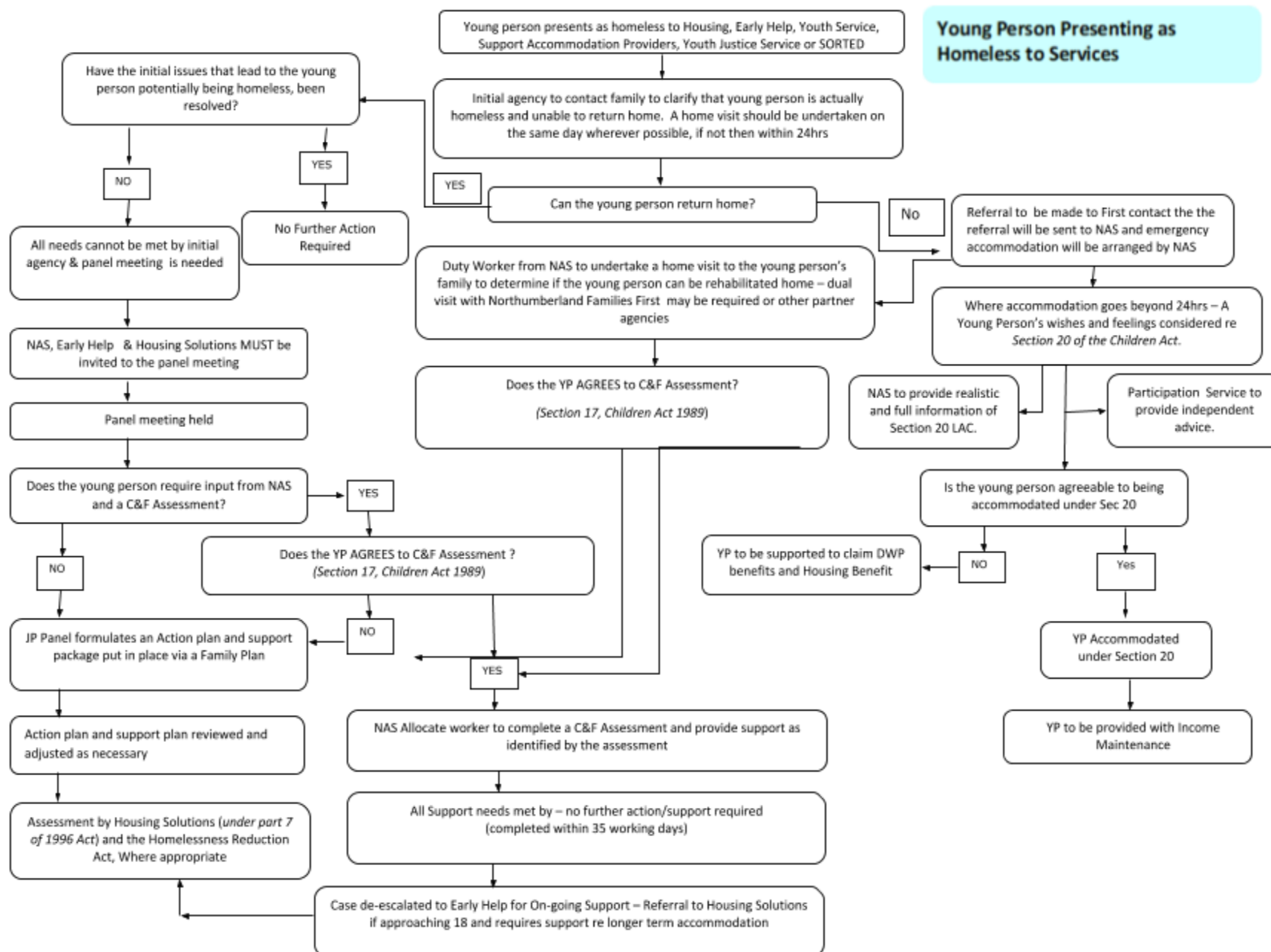
First Contact will forward this referral to either Early Help or NAS for the calling of a panel meeting. In most instances the referral will be forwarded to the Early Help Services unless there are significant safeguarding concerns or issues of immediate homelessness, in which case the referral will directed to NAS

If at the meeting it is agreed that supported accommodation is appropriate for the young person, support will be put in place for the young person to access accommodation via the provider.

Where a young person (aged 16-17 years) is in a supported accommodation and is issued a notice of eviction, the supported accommodation provider needs to make a referral to First Contact to make services aware of the impending eviction. At this point the referral will be referred to NAS to undertake an assessment and determine the accommodation and support needs of the young person.

NB: Where a young person is currently in accommodation with the provider but at risk of eviction; then a referral should be made to First Contact to advise of the situation and for a referral made to the most appropriate service to support the young person, in maintaining their accommodation.

Young Person Presenting as Homeless to Services



Useful Contacts

Service	Contact Number	Email
Homelessness Team	0345 600 6400 (including out of hours)	housinghomeless@northumberland.gov.uk
Vicki Flint - Homelessness Team Manager	01670 623085	Vicki.flint@northumberland.gov.uk
Lisa Goodridge - Homelessness Officer	01670 622506	lisa.goodridge@northumberland.gov.uk
Paul Charlwood - Homelessness Officer	01670 623106	paul.charlwood@northumberland.gov.uk
Hayley Robson - Homelessness Officer	01670 623094	hayley.robson@northumberland.gov.uk
Rachel Walton - Homelessness Officer	01670 623095	rachel.walton@northumberland.gov.uk
Claire Coyle - Homelessness Officer	01670 623093	claire.coyle@northumberland.gov.uk
Suki Kaur - Homelessness Officer	01670 623084	suki.kaur@northumberland.gov.uk
Anne-Marie Rutherford - Homelessness Officer	01670 623056	am.rutherford@northumberland.gov.uk
Bethany Dobson - Homelessness Officer	01670 623083	bethany.dobson@northumberland.gov.uk
Susan McBrearty - Homelessness Officer	01670 622145	susan.mcbrearty@northumberland.gov.uk
Kylie McLean - Homelessness Officer	01670 622320	kylie.mclean@northumberland.gov.uk
Northumberland Adolescent Service NAS Duty	01670 536 400	NasDuty@northumberland.gov.uk

Cheryl Austin - 14+ Team Manager		cheryl.austin@northumberland.gov.uk
Kim Freeman - 18+ Deputy Team Manager		kimberley.freeman@northumberland.gov.uk
Darran Hope - Sorted Team Manager		Darran.hope@northumberland.gov.uk
Paul Brownlee - Youth Justice Service Team Manager		Paul.brownlee@northumberland.gov.uk
Katrina Fox - Youth Justice Service Deputy Team Manager		Katrina.fox@northumberland.gov.uk
Ashley Brown - Youth Service Team Manager		Ashley.brownlee@northumberland.gov.uk
Andrew Elliot - Youth Service - Early Help Lead		Andrew.elliott@northumberland.gov.uk
Ian Aspinall - Youth Service - Prevention Lead		ian.aspinall@northumberland.gov.uk
Ben Sanderson - Youth Service - Participation Lead		Ben.sanderson@northumberland.gov.uk
Ginny Younger - Accommodation Team Lead		Ginny.younger@northumberland.gov.uk
Emergency Duty Team	01670 536 400	edt@northumberland.gov.uk
First Contact/Children's Triage	01670 536 400	first.contact@northumberland.gov.uk