

Section 2

Arrangements for Care Leavers

SECTION 2 CARE LEAVERS

Joint Arrangements – Planning Accommodation Pathways and Housing Arrangements for Care Leavers

Introduction to the Care Leaver Section

The following section of the JHP sets out the joint commitment (Children’s Services, Housing Authorities, Registered Housing Providers (Supported and General Needs) and Support Service Providers) to meeting the accommodation, housing and support needs of children looked after and care leavers who are the responsibility of Hertfordshire County Council and the ten District/Borough Councils within Hertfordshire. The approach acknowledges and confirms the joint commitment to ‘Corporate Parenting’ across the range of agencies that support the ‘Accommodation Offer’ and ‘Local Offer’ for care leavers.

The primary aim of this protocol is to ensure that care leavers experience a smooth transition from care to independent living, with the support they need to make this a successful and positive move and avoid the need to make a homelessness application.

Both Children’s Services and the ten Housing Authorities in Hertfordshire are committed to avoiding the use of B & B accommodation even in emergency situations. As such, B & B accommodation will only be used where all other forms of emergency accommodation have been explored and are unavailable.

This section of the Joint Housing Protocol should be read in conjunction with:

The Housing Act 1996 (particularly Part 6 and 7)
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/contents>

The Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-22-care-leavers>

The Children Act 1989 (particularly Section 23, 24 and 27)
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents>

The Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers England - Regulations and Guidance 2010 (Revised 2015)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-transition-to-adulthood-for-care-leavers>

The Children and Social Work Act 2017
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/16/contents/enacted>

Wherever possible, the JHP has adopted a consistent process and approach across all ten District and Borough Councils. However, given the importance of local approaches and the fact that only four out of the ten housing authorities hold housing stock, this single approach has some local variation. Where different arrangements apply in certain authorities, these are set out below.

For ease of use the JHP is set out as a sequential set of tasks and activities on an accommodation and housing pathway. Whilst each care leaver will have a unique set of needs, the model pathway provides a step by step guide to the tasks, actions and responsibilities required, individual young people will progress along the pathway at different ages or stages, based on their specific circumstances and needs.

1. Children Looked After and Eligible & Relevant Care Leavers aged 16 & 17

This section refers to young people aged 16 or 17 who are children looked after or care leavers and who are or will become, part of the 'Priority Need' group as set out in 'The Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002'.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2002/2051/contents/made>

Where a 16 or 17 year old is looked after or deemed a 'Relevant' care leaver, Children's Services has the responsibility for the provision of a 'placement' or accommodation. This is also the case for all children looked after aged 16 & 17. In situations where one of these groups of children/young people presents as homeless to a housing authority, they should be referred to Children's Services as the housing authority does not have a responsibility for this group as they are deemed the responsibility of Children's Services.

2. Local Connection - Part 6

Children looked after gain a local connection under part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 in the housing authority area where they lived at the point, they became looked after (i.e. settled accommodation with a parent or a person with parental responsibility).

Children looked after or care leavers who are also Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) are allocated a local connection under part 6 via a countywide allocations rota, as agreed by the 10 housing authorities and Children's Services. UASC are allocated via a rota as they do not have a formal local connection but become the responsibility of Hertfordshire Children's Service due to making an asylum claim in Hertfordshire, or due to being allocated to Hertfordshire via the National Transfer Scheme for Migrant Children.

The rota ensures that there is an equitable distribution across the ten housing authorities. The rota allocation is made at the point the young person is granted a status that allows the young person to access public funds and services. Whilst there is some flexibility to reallocate a part 6 rota allocation to the local authority where the young person is placed, it is a requirement that there is an equitable distribution across all ten District/Boroughs over a calendar year. The Senior Placements Officer in the Brokerage Accommodation Team allocates and manages the rota places and process.

A local connection under part 6 enables care leavers to be given priority access to social housing via the local allocations policy(scheme) and process and therefore avoids the need to make a homelessness application (part 7).

3. Local Connection - Part 7

All care leavers who are the responsibility of Hertfordshire Children's Services have a local connection under part 7 (homelessness application) with all ten housing authority areas in Hertfordshire.

Having a local connection under part 7, allows young people to make a homelessness application (if they are homeless or will become homeless within 56 days). Wherever possible, the Hertfordshire JHP encourages (Children's Services) young people to use their priority need access via part 6 rather than via a part 7 homelessness application.

Where a care leaver is placed outside of Hertfordshire prior to their 16th birthday, has lived in the same housing authority area for at least 2 years and is homeless or will become homeless within 56 days, they will also have a 'local connection' (under part 7) and are eligible to make a homelessness application in that area (part 7) as well as an application in Hertfordshire.

Whilst a part 6 application is likely to lead to a social sector tenancy, a part 7 application may be discharged via a 6-month assured short hold private sector tenancy or the provision of a 6 months 'suitable accommodation' provision that meets the needs of the young person, this could be in a hostel or supported accommodation. In certain circumstances a part 7 application may result in a decision that the young person is deemed intentionally homeless.

Section 22.4, Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018, emphasis the need for joint working arrangements and avoiding part 7 applications wherever possible.

"Any joint working arrangements between a children's services authority and a housing authority for care leavers' transition to independent living should include ensuring the delivery of effective preparation for independence with planned, sustainable moves into supported or independent accommodation. Local processes and/or practices should not involve care leavers routinely being treated as homeless when care placements come to an end in order to place the housing authority under an obligation to secure accommodation under Part 7 of the 1996 Act.

4. Joining the Housing Needs Register

All children looked after reaching the age of 16 should be supported to join their part 6 local connection housing needs register as soon as possible after their 16th birthday and within 3 months at the latest. Where a young person becomes looked after following their 16th birthday they should join the register within 3 months of becoming looked after at the latest. The responsibility for undertaking this task rests with the case holding social worker. A part 6 application will enable young people to access housing via the local housing authority allocations scheme and will allow priority access via choice-based lettings/the local allocations approach.

5. Joining the Housing Needs Register - Placed in Hertfordshire - outside of their part 6 area - prior to the age of 16

Where a child looked after was placed (by Children's Services) into a housing authority in Hertfordshire that is not their part 6 local connection area (prior to their 16th birthday), they should be supported to make a part 6 housing needs register application in both areas (host and originating area).

In recognition that children looked after will have developed support networks and links in the host area, housing authorities have agreed to a reciprocal arrangement to avoid the need for young people to return to an area that they may no longer have links or connections with. When submitting the host area application, social

workers/personal advisers should set out what networks the young person has developed and the benefits of remaining in the host area and reasons why they could not, or it would not be beneficial to return to their originating area. Consideration will be given to young people who have developed or have durable networks and support in the host area or where there are safety and vulnerability issues which discourage a return to their local connection area.

Young people should also join their originating area housing needs register as part of contingency planning approach.

Where children looked after move to, or are placed into an area that is not their part 6 local connection area after their 16th birthday (within Hertfordshire), they should be supported to join the new areas' housing needs register if the placement is due to be a) long term, b) is deemed settled and c) the young person will continue to reside in that area until (and after) their 18th birthday, d) they have been in the new area for at least 3 months. The social worker/personal adviser should discuss the situation with the housing authority contact in that area. The primary aim of the approach is to avoid making un-necessary housing application and to avoid homelessness applications at or after age 18.

All children looked after and care leavers aged 16 and 17 should have a housing register application lodged within three months of becoming 16 years old, or within three months of becoming looked after if this occurs after their 16th Birthday. All children looked after aged 16 & 17 should have an application lodged with both their 'local connection' housing authority area and, if placed outside of their 'local connection' area, prior to age 16, their 'host authority area'.

Documents required to complete the Housing Needs Register:

- One passport size photograph;
- One form of photographic identification (Passport, Driving License, Identity Card, Biometric Card);
- One form of identification (Birth Certificate, National Insurance Number, Bank Statement);
- Two proofs of address (Letter from Local Authority on Headed Paper and other one other identity document);
- Proof of immigration eligibility (Biometric Card, Home Office Letter, Residency Card) – If Applicable;
- Proof of leaving care status and eligibility (Appendix 2.1, Letter from Local Authority);
- The young person will also need an e-mail address.

The documents listed above must be collected in advance of completing the Housing Needs Register process and must be submitted with the application. In circumstances where the young person does not have a National Insurance Number they should still complete a Housing Needs Register application. It has been agreed that a hypothetical number can be used [AA 01 01 01 A], information should be included in the 'Additional Information Box' as to when the NINO application was made. In some areas the National Insurance Number should be left blank, with information included in the 'Additional Information Box' as to when the NINO application was made. Once the NINO is issued, it should be sent to the housing authority to be added to the application.

Authorised copies of the documents should be submitted with the application and in some areas, documents can be uploaded through the Housing Needs Register Portal. In Watford documents must be submitted through the portal.

Once the Housing Needs Register Application has been submitted, social workers/personal advisers must ensure the application has been completed, validated and authorised by the nominated housing representative (confirmation should be sought via an e-mail). Once validated, the reference number and application date should be sent to the Senior Placements Officer within Brokerage.

- The Housing Needs Register and Identity Documentation should be accompanied by Appendix 2.1 – Supporting Letter to Confirm Child Look After Status and to Request Inclusion on the Housing Needs Register.

6. Children Looked After Placed Outside of Hertfordshire Prior to the Age of 16

Where children looked after are placed outside of Hertfordshire prior to their 16th birthday, remain in the same area for at least two years and are homeless, or will become homeless within the subsequent 56 days, they can make a part 7 homelessness application to the housing authority where they were placed/living on or after their 18th birthday and up to age 21.

Social workers/personal advisers and young people will need to be aware that a homelessness application is unlikely to result in the allocation of a social tenancy.

Where a child looked after is placed outside of Hertfordshire prior to their 16th birthday, the housing authority where they are placed (host authority) should be approached when the young person reaches the age of 16 to clarify if the young person can join the local Housing Needs Register and/or if they would be required to make a homelessness application at age 18 or thereafter, rather than be given priority via the housing allocations/housing needs register process.

Wherever possible, part 7 homelessness applications should be avoided, planning and contingency planning should include consideration of local supported accommodation and private sector options, returning to Hertfordshire in addition to a homelessness application.

7. Accommodation Pathways – Pathway Planning, Life & Tenancy Sustainment Skills and Supported Accommodation

As a general rule, all ten housing authorities expect young people to experience some time in semi-independent private sector/registered landlord supported accommodation in order to demonstrate they have developed the skills to manage an independent tenancy. This could include supported accommodation provided by a social landlord (Aldwyck, Hightown Pretorian, Paradigm Housing, Sapphire Housing, the YMCA), a period in a Practice Flat, Supported Lodgings, Staying Put, University Halls of Residence. In principle, the young person needs to be able to demonstrate that they

have developed the skills required to manage and sustain an independent tenancy (both practical and emotional/relationship skills). Children's Services and the supported accommodation providers have access to a range of life skills activities and groups and have a variety of materials that can be used to evidence the life skills the young person has acquired.

In addition, and in order to ensure that young people can sustain independent accommodation most registered housing providers and housing authorities that hold housing stock will undertake 'Affordability' checks as part of the housing allocations procedure. Young people should be supported by their social worker or personal adviser to complete the affordability check forms and process.

The provision of life skills and tenancy sustainment skills should also be considered in the context of whether the young person will require additional support when moving to supported or independent accommodation.

Please see section 15 – Additional Support Needs

8. Registering for Supported Accommodation

When placing children looked after or care leavers on the housing needs register, consideration should also be given to which independence/supported accommodation options would benefit the young person and what may be available.

The placement and accommodation sections of the Pathway Plan, particularly for 16 & 17 year old's should always consider semi-independence planning, including Staying Put, Supported Lodgings, Practice Flats and Supported Accommodation.

In some housing authorities, referrals to registered supported accommodation providers must go via the housing authority. In all situations social workers/personal advisers must check the route into registered supported accommodation and ensure the young person's Housing Needs Register is updated should they move to registered supported accommodation.

Given the limited amount of register supported accommodation, advanced planning and ensuring young people have joined waiting lists well in advance of needing registered supported accommodation.

Where young people's needs are such that they are unlikely to be offered registered supported accommodation, it is critical that the 'Care Leavers with Complex Accommodation Pathways' meeting takes place so that both Children's Services and Housing can plan an appropriate accommodation pathway.

See Section 14 - Care Leavers with Complex Accommodation Pathways

9. Housing Register Renewals and Change of Circumstances

In most housing authorities, once an applicant has been accepted onto the Housing Needs Register, their application will remain live, with the person having a duty to inform the housing authority of any change of circumstances. In several housing authorities, the applicant will be contacted on a regular basis to review their circumstances.

In some authorities the application is added to the Housing Needs Register but remains suspended and inactive until the Accommodation Transition - Move-on Request Letter is received. In these authorities a renewal is not required.

In East Herts applicants must renew their application each year and in St Albans they must renew ever 6-months, they will be sent an e-mail inviting them to renew and checking if any of their circumstances have changed. Applicants must respond to these e-mails, if they do not, they are likely to have their application closed.

Young people's pathway plans should always set out which Housing Needs Register, or, Registers the young person's application is logged on, if there are any renewal arrangements relating to that authority and who will inform housing if/when the young person's circumstances change.

To ensure renewals are acted upon, it is recommended that the following e-mail address is used to ensure all renewal requested are responded to.

HousingBrokerageAccommodation@hertfordshire.gov.uk

10. Accommodation Transition and Move-On Process and Timing

When it is assessed that a) the young person is ready for a move to supported accommodation or independent living/accommodation, b) it is anticipated that they will be ready for move-on to supported accommodation or independent living/accommodation after six months, c) is approaching age 18, d) is approaching 21, the accommodation transition or 'Move-On Process' should be initiated.

This involves submitting a recent risk assessment and pathway plan (reviewed and updated within the previous three months).

- The pathway plan and risk assessment should be accompanied by Appendix Two – Accommodation Transition - Move-on Request Letter.
- Please note the Joint Housing Protocol Information Sharing Agreement and Local Housing Authority Information Sharing Arrangements - young people should confirm agreement to sharing information.

Each housing authority has a slightly different approach to how they process an accommodation transition- move-on application. For example, some will award priority on receipt of the information; some will refer the young person's case to a specific panel, and some will ask the young person to attend an interview. The housing authority will make their own decision regarding awarding priority based on the information provided (and interview etc., if undertaken).

Some housing authorities will provide a 'Choice Based Lettings' bidding code and young people will be able to review available properties on a weekly/two weekly cycle

and express a preference. Some housing authorities will allow the young person to 'bid' on properties for a period of time and if the young person is not successful or has not taken part in the choice based lettings process, they will be given a 'direct let' or offer'. Some housing authorities make a 'direct let' or 'offer' rather than using choice-based lettings. Social workers/personal advisers who are supporting care leavers through the accommodation transition-move-on process, should check which approach is used in each area.

Social workers/personal advisers may be required to assist young people in the bidding process, or, in some cases bid on their behalf, especially if time limited bidding applies, particularly as priority can be withdrawn at the end of the timeframe if the young person does not bid. The process should be discussed with the Brokerage Service, Senior Placements Officer.

11. Accommodation Transition-Move-On - Tenancy Sign-Up

To ensure young people are supported appropriately to sustain accommodation the young person's social worker, personal adviser or Herts Young Homeless (hyh) floating support worker should attend the 'tenancy sign-up' process with the young person and the housing officer/worker. This will provide a named support network who can liaise, should the young person be experiencing difficulties. Housing officers/workers should contact social workers/personal advisers/floating support workers where a young person is experiencing housing and tenancy sustainment difficulties or rent arrears amounting to four weeks or more.

12. Duty Discharge

Where a housing authority offer a property (via choice based lettings, a direct let, or a discharge after a homelessness application) and the applicant rejects the 'offer' without reasonable grounds, the housing authority may deem this to be a 'Duty Discharge' and is likely to result in the housing authority owing no further duty. It is for the housing authority to deem what is a 'reasonable offer'. A 'reasonable offer' may involve some travel to education, training, employment, support networks etc, i.e. not being in an ideal location and may also involve being of a size and type of property that the applicant may not feel is ideal. Given the amount of accommodation available and the fact that the 'offer' will have been assessed before being made, the grounds for challenging a 'Duty Discharge' decision are limited. Prior to rejecting an 'offer', personal advisers should discuss the circumstances of a possible rejection and appeal with the young person and the housing officer. The 'offer' of a given property is also often time limited so the young person will need to respond as soon as possible.

In the case of most housing authorities, once the applicant has accepted and moved into the property, they can then apply for a review of the suitability of the accommodation they have been 'offered', if this review is successful, they could be relocated to more suitable accommodation. If this review fails and the property is deemed suitable, then the young person will be allowed to remain in the property that they have moved into. If they refuse to move into the property and the review finds the property suitable, they will find themselves homeless and the local authority won't provide any further 'offers' of accommodation (intentionally homeless).

Social workers/personal advisers should check the arrangements in the specific housing authority area, as there will be slight variations in how the 'offer' and 'duty discharge' process operates.

13. Homelessness Applications

A key aim of the Joint Housing Protocol is to avoid care leavers needing to make homelessness applications. However, under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 care leavers aged 18 to 21/25 have the right to present as homeless, the Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018 sets out that where a care leaver presents as homeless, the housing authority should liaise with the responsible Children's Service to ensure that the young person's Personal Adviser should be involved in the homelessness assessment process.

Note: Qualifying Care Leavers who are eligible for advice and assistance and who are undertaking full time further or higher education and are unable to occupy term time accommodation in a vacation are deemed 'Relevant Students' and should be provided with accommodation or the means to secure accommodation by Children's Services during a vacation.

Young people must be made aware that a homelessness application under part 7 a) does not provide access to social housing, b) may result in the young person being placed in temporary accommodation, which may be outside of the area where they have presented as homeless, and c) may result in the young person being placed into the private sector, which may also be outside of the local area. Part 7 duties have two elements a) prevention duties, b) relief duties; the housing authority will set out under which duty the care leaver is being supported.

It should also be noted that the outcome of a homelessness application may be an intentionally homeless decision. If an applicant is accepted as homeless under part 7, it may lead to them being placed into supported accommodation or the private sector (as long as the young person is provided with suitable accommodation that is available for at least 6 months, that will be classed as a suitable homelessness discharge of duty).

It will be for the housing authority to undertake the homelessness application and decide on the appropriate action and outcome. Where young people make a homelessness application, the housing authority will have a responsibility to assess the care leaver's housing and support needs and develop a personalised housing plan, as part of this process arrangements should be made to enable the leaving care personal adviser to be involved in the assessment and to integrate elements of the Personalised Housing Plan with the Pathway Plan to avoid duplication.

14. Duty To Refer

Wherever possible, care leavers will be supported through the priority need, local housing allocations approach (part 6) and will therefore avoid using a homelessness or duty to refer approach. A duty to refer approach should only be used where the young person has to make a homelessness application, i.e. to an authority outside of Hertfordshire, or where they are at risk of losing their accommodation (i.e. social housing or private sector) after the age of 18.

A referral to a local authority housing authority under the Joint Housing Protocol agreement for care leaver move on fulfils the requirements of the duty to refer. Social workers and personal advisers should be ready to work with the local authority housing department to respond to any potential homelessness, and if the young person is likely to be evicted from their accommodation within 56 days, the responsible worker should contact the local authority housing department where the move on process has been completed.

Consent from the young person should be sought prior to a duty to refer – referral. See Appendix 4.4 for Practice Guidance Note and Duty to Refer Procedures for each District/Borough area.

15. Care Leavers with Complex Accommodation Pathways

Where it is identified that a child looked after or care leaver may have complex needs that may impact on their accommodation/housing pathways the social worker/personal adviser should liaise with the specific housing authority and arrange a joint meeting. The timing of this meeting will depend on the type of need of the young person and their individual circumstances. For example, the meeting may need to take place at 1) the point of joining the Housing Needs Register, 2) at the point of submitting the Accommodation Transition-Move-On application, 3) when a discharge date is identified for those being discharged from hospital or a date is identified for those being released from remand/custody, 4) where a young person receives a diagnosis of additional needs. The responsibility for setting up and co-ordinating the complex accommodation/housing pathways meeting rests with the social worker (16 & 17 year old's) or personal adviser (18 to 21/25 year old's).

Particular attention should be placed on developing an accommodation pathway for care leavers who have additional needs, such as, physical disabilities and learning difficulties, those who are being released from custody and those that are being discharged from hospital. As set out above, social workers/personal advisers should set up meetings with housing officers to ensure robust and appropriate accommodation transition-move-on plans are in place. A meeting (discussion) with the relevant housing authority should be held when the young person enters custody or is remanded or when the young person enters hospital. As soon as a prospective, or proposed discharge or release date is highlighted, a further meeting (discussion) with the relevant housing authority should be held and appropriate discharge/release planning take place.

16. Additional Support Needs

Pathway plans for care leavers moving on to independent living should pay close attention to 'networks of support' and set out who will be available to support the young person in their new accommodation, what role they will play, what availability they will have and how they can be contacted. This network should include, personal advisers, housing officers/tenancy support officers, family, floating support and any specialist support service.

16.1 Herts Young Homeless - Floating Support

Children's Service commission **hyh** to provide floating support to care leavers who require additional support above that provided by social workers/personal advisers and the housing support provision. Social workers/personal advisers should consider the support needs of young people when they submit the Accommodation Transition and Move-On paperwork and a referral to **hyh** Floating Support Service should be made where needed. The referral for floating support can be made by emailing the floating support team at: info@homelesshub.help along with a recent pathway plan and risk assessment. Consent from the young person must be sought prior to the referral being made. To ensure the floating support worker is in place to support the young person's move to independent accommodation, the referral for floating support should be made at the same time as the Transition and Move-On referral.

16.2 Herts Young Homeless - Prevention of Homelessness/Rough Sleeping Support – Intensive Outreach Support Service

Hyh are also running a Department for Education (DfE) funded intensive outreach support program for care leavers who are at risk of homelessness or rough sleeping. The program provides a period of intensive outreach support to enable young people to 1) access a tenancy or 2) sustain a tenancy. See project criteria.

Where it is assessed that young people require additional support, a referral should be made to Herts Young Homeless for care leaver floating support as above and/or intensive outreach support service.

17. Care Leavers aged 21 to 25

Care Leavers aged 21 to 25 may be deemed in 'Priority Need' where they are likely to be vulnerable as a result of having been looked after, accommodated or fostered (Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018). See below.

Where a care leaver has not accessed an independent tenancy via the local allocations policy and their part 6 priority as a care leaver by age 21, this may continue to be available between the ages of 21 and 25 where the housing authority has been notified of any changed circumstances and vulnerabilities and where a request has been submitted prior to the age of 21 for a priority need/care leaver priority deferment.

For example, care leavers who are undertaking higher education, or residential further education on their 21st birthday can defer their accommodation transition-move-on application until six months prior to the ending of their course.

For all other groups, the individual care leavers circumstances and vulnerabilities should be discussed with the specific housing authority and individual arrangements made.

In order to support this approach and in recognition of the entitlement to a Personal Adviser until age 25 (Children and Social Work Act 2017), all care leavers who have a deferred priority need entitlement will require a named leaving care personal adviser to assist with the accommodation transition-move-on and housing allocation process.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-8-priority-need#para8-28>

(f) a person aged 21 or more who is vulnerable as a result of having been looked after, accommodated or fostered (except a person who is a 'relevant student') (see [paragraphs 8.28–8.31](#)).

18. Accessing the Private Sector and Trustees (Guarantors)

Where a young person leaving care is approaching the age of 18 and will not have access to housing authority or housing association independent accommodation, a deposit and rent in advance will be available to enable them to access the privately rented accommodation sector. This is primarily aimed at supporting young people to remain in the area they were placed, which may be outside of Hertfordshire and where a young person does not have a 'local connection' or cannot make a part 7 homelessness application.

Where a young person has lost their accommodation and or been deemed intentionally homeless (18 to 21/25-year olds), a deposit and rent in advance will be available to enable them to access the privately rented accommodation sector subject to an assessment of need and agreement by Hertfordshire Access to Resources Panel (HARP).

In situations where a housing authority is placing a young person into the private sector the Housing Authority will be responsible for the deposit/rent bond. In situations where Children's Services is placing a young person into the private sector, they will be responsible for the deposit and rent in advance.

Children's Services may act as a trustee (or guarantor) for children looked after and care leavers aged 16 or 17, following an assessment of need and all other possible guarantors being explored and ruled out. Where necessary, Children's Services will meet the costs of the tenancy agreement. The level of deposit and rent in advance provided must not exceed the Local Housing Allowance rate for the given area.

In situations where Children's Services act as a guarantor for 16 and 17 year olds, a new tenancy agreement should be produced when the young person reaches their 18th birthday, so that the liability and responsibility for the condition and the cost of the accommodation is transferred to the young person.

A young person leaving care who has been looked after by Children's Services outside Hertfordshire and has a local connection under the Housing Act 1996 with a housing authority within Hertfordshire will remain the responsibility of Hertfordshire Children's Services and their originating housing authority, where they have a part 6 'local connection'. The young person may also make an application to another authority if they have a local connection or are eligible to join their register or is able to make a part 7 homelessness application.

Care leavers up to the age of 25 who are living in the private sector are exempt from the Single Room Rent Restriction and as such are eligible for Local Housing Allowance (LHA) up to the one-bedroom LHA rate. From the age of 20, the pathway plan for care leavers living in the private sector should set out how the young person is going to manage the rent if they are claiming a means tested benefit at the age of 25.

Where young people are working, not claiming a benefit and covering the whole rent from their earnings, they will not be affected, however, consideration should be given to how they would manage if they had to claim a means tested benefit. In principle the transfer to the shared room LHA rate may require the young person to move to shared accommodation beyond their 25th birthday if they have not been able to enter employment.

19. Access to 'Suitable Accommodation' Children Looked After and Care Leavers Aged 16 & 17

The allocated social worker and Brokerage Service will determine how best to meet the accommodation and support needs of children looked after and care leavers aged under 18. From the age of 16 onwards (at the latest), all plans will take account of the need to work in partnership with housing authorities to ensure young people experience a positive transition to independent living. The Brokerage Service will consider a range of resources for 16 & 17 year olds, both in-house and external, e.g. supported lodgings, registered social landlord supported accommodation, private sector semi-independent living.

The placement planning, semi-independent and independence planning process should involve a joint approach across Children's Services, Supported Accommodation Providers and Housing Authorities to ensure an integrated approach is taken to meeting a care leavers housing and support needs.

Children's Services should only provide 16 & 17 year olds with supported accommodation which is deemed suitable and meets the 'Other Arrangements' requirements. 'Other Arrangements' is the term for all placements for children looked after aged 16 & 17 that are regulated outside of the Care Standards Act 2000 and are thus not inspected by Ofsted.

Stemming from the Children and Young Person's Act 2008 Hertfordshire has a Children Looked After Sufficiency Statement which sets out the range of placements available to meet the needs of children looked after requiring placements in Hertfordshire.

Children's Services will take account of the views and wishes and feelings of the young person, and of their parents when assessing the placement and accommodation needs of individual young people. However, it is for the local authority housing department or their partner housing provider to determine the type of accommodation that best meets the needs of individual care leavers.

Children's Services will always seek to place a child looked after/care leaver in, or near their originating housing authority, and/or where their family resides, in order to maintain their family, local connections and support network, unless this would not be in the young person's interests.

20. Summary of Actions Required by the Children's Services Worker Regarding Accommodation Planning for Care Leavers

1. Social Worker/Personal Adviser in consultation with the Senior Placements Officer (Brokerage) to complete an on-line housing application form with the young person

at the age of 16 or at the point of becoming looked after where this occurs after their 16th birthday.

2. Collect and submit the young person's proof of identity, address and supporting letter – appendix 2.1, to the housing authority and inform the Senior Placements Officer based within the Brokerage Service.
3. Six months prior to the young person reaching the age of 18, or six months prior to being assessed as ready for independent accommodation (from the age of 17½), or six months prior to reaching the age of 21, the social worker/personal adviser should complete the Accommodation Transition-Move-On Process (pathway plan, risk assessment (updated in the previous 3 months) and the appendix 2.1, move-on letter). If the young person will not be ready/require accommodation at 21, a request for a deferment should be made to housing.
4. All housing needs register applications and the verification that the young person has successfully lodged their application must always be passed to the Senior Placements Officer in Brokerage so that the young person is add to the 'Housing Register' and 'Tracking' database.

21. Monitoring Arrangements

The Senior Placements Officer, Brokerage Accommodation Team operates a 'Housing Register' and 'Tracking' database to ensure that a record is kept of all Housing Needs Register applications, change of circumstances and accommodation transition-move-on planning. The data base is also used to allocate UASC to a Local Connection Housing Needs Register and to keep a record of which housing authority has a part 6 Local Connection duty and which authorities (where children are placed outside of Hertfordshire) has a part 7 homelessness duty.

The Senior Placements Officer meets with each named housing authority representative on a quarterly basis to plan for the accommodation needs of care leavers linked to each area.

The Senior Placements Officer meets with Children's Service team managers who hold case responsibility for children looked after cases to plan for the semi-independent, supported accommodation and independent accommodation needs of all care leavers.

One aspect of the 'Housing Register' and 'Tracker' is to record the type of tenancy care leavers are living in and how long they have sustained the tenancies they hold.

Monitoring of the operation of the Care Leavers Section of the JHP takes place via the JHP Steering Group, the Strategic Partnership Accommodation Board and the Heads of Housing Group. A written review of the JHP (including the care leavers section) will be undertaken on a yearly basis and will be presented to the SPAB and HoH.

22. Concerns and Complaints - Escalation Procedure

Where a concern is raised about an individual case, the two respective parties (social worker/personal adviser and housing officer) should seek to resolve the issue. If this

does not address the specific issue, it should be escalated to the respective managers. If this does not address the specific issue, it should be escalated to the respective Named Service Representatives. If this does not address the specific issue, it should be escalated to the JHP Development Officer (Children's Services), Strategic Partnership Accommodation Board and Head of Housing Group.

- Stage One - Workers
- Stage Two – Managers
- Stage Three – Named Service Representatives
- Stage Four – Strategic Partnership Accommodation Board and Head of Housing Group