

# YOUTH HOUSING IN BRISTOL.

## A GUIDE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE AGED 16/17 OR LEAVING CARE

This leaflet is a guide to help you access the youth supported housing offer in Bristol. There are **two routes** to accessing youth housing either you are leaving care and you want to move into independent living, or you have presented and been assessed as being homeless.

### How to get help if I need housing?

If you are homeless or at risk of homelessness, you should contact Bristol Youth MAPS. Freephone 0800 03454213 (between 9-5pm) or [bristol-youthmaps@1625ip.co.uk](mailto:bristol-youthmaps@1625ip.co.uk)

Get Help - 1625 independent People: <https://www.1625ip.co.uk/get-help/>

Bristol Youth MAPS is a team of people from different organisations who work with young people aged 16-21 to prevent homelessness. They will talk to you and ask you questions to find out why you are at risk of homelessness and what help you can be offered.

If you are a young person in care who is ready to move on, or you are a care leaver, then you should talk to your personal adviser or social worker. They will be able to advise you and they will work with Bristol Youth MAPS if this is needed.

Whichever route you have taken, if you are a young person in care, a young person leaving care or you are a young person who has presented and been assessed as homeless, your allocated worker (housing worker, social worker or personal adviser) will make an application for you on the Housing Support Register. The Housing Support Register (HSR) is a database which manages applications from people who need supported housing and makes waiting list referrals to the vacancies that arise.

### What information is needed on the HSR application?

The application form outlines your individual needs, including your skills in living independently and any worries that we have about risks. It is important that your worker has as much detail about your circumstances as possible so that we can match you to the right supported housing.

### What accommodation is available to me?

All the accommodation is grouped in either high, medium, or low housing support. When your worker completes the HSR they will say what type of supported accommodation they think will best suit your needs at that time. This may change over time and the HSR can be updated if you learn new skills or your circumstances change.

### What do the different levels of support mean?

#### High Support:

This accommodation is often (not always) staffed 24 hour a day with a managed front door. They often have lots of young people living in the accommodation.

#### Medium Support:

This is mostly small, shared houses with limited staff onsite, mainly visiting support

#### Low Support:

These services offer a low level of support, 1-2 hours per week. There is no staff on site, only visiting support.

## Emergency accommodation

We know that sometimes young people need accommodation at very short notice, occasionally on the same day. It is not always possible to find a space in longer term accommodation and you may be offered temporary accommodation until your needs are fully assessed and you can be matched with a longer term option.

There are lots of different types of emergency accommodation. Some of the accommodation is rooms in youth housing these are called **crash pads and assessment beds**. Sometimes these are full and you may be offered alternative emergency accommodation e.g. a room in a shared house.

There are 2 **crash pads** available at Bristol Foyer. These are rooms where young people can stay for a short period (usually a few days) whilst other accommodation is found. The 3 **assessment beds** are at St George's House. Young people can stay in these rooms for up to 28 days to allow a full assessment of their needs to be completed and a move on plan agreed.

## High Support accommodation

There are a few high support offers for young people in Bristol. **Staying Put and the High Support Flat** are only available for children preparing to leave care and are the only accommodation not applied for through the HSR.

**Staying Put:** is where a care leaver continues to live with their foster carer after their 18th birthday. This means that you can continue to live with people you know and who have supported you as you have grown up until you are 21. You and your carer would sign a Living together agreement so that you are clear on the "rules of living together" as these may have changed now that you have turned 18.

**High Support flat:** This is a taster flat where you will be offered 10 hours of support a week to learn independent living skills. You can live in this accommodation for up to a year.

**Shared Lives:** is a service that aims to provide care, support, and accommodation to adults with learning difficulties, physical disabilities, mental health problems or younger adults. You would live in the carer's home and be supported to be as independent as possible. You may need help with personal care, using public transport, doing your shopping, or preparing your own meals. You may also need support to attend health appointments, manage your own money including benefits.

**St George's House** has 24 rooms in cluster flats. The service offers 24 hours staffing where you can access ad hoc support and you will be allocated a named key worker who will offer a weekly 1:1 support session and you are expected to engage in support each week.

**Bristol Foyer:** has 31 rooms in cluster flats. The Service offers 24/7 access to staff/security and you will be assigned a Youth Development Worker. To live at The Foyer you are required to engage in support each week and a minimum of 10 hours meaningful activity. This can be anything from college, work or engaging in the Foyer programme and workshops.

## Medium Support accommodation

The medium support accommodation is **Branch Out** or **The Projects**

**The Projects** offer accommodation for 16-21 year olds for up to 18 months to prepare you for independent living. You will be offered 1.5 hours individual support a week, on call support during daytime and nighttime hours and regular welfare checks.

**Branch Out** (supported lodgings). This is for young people aged 16-21 who would like to live semi-independently in a family setting with at least one appropriately trained/experienced adult. To live with a branch out host you must be in education or employment. The support is largely 1:1, flexible and would depend on your needs. You can stay with your branch out host for up to 2 years. The aim is to support you to develop your independence skills to successfully manage your own tenancy.

## Low Support accommodation

The low support accommodation is **dispersed housing**. There are 174 rooms in dispersed housing. Support of 1-2 hours a week is offered to help you access the benefits you are entitled to and manage your finances (including debt management) and provide home safety advice and arrange repairs and adaptations. This accommodation is mainly shared housing but there are some self-contained flats. Young people are expected to move on from this accommodation within 2 years and by the age of 25.

### What are independent living skills?

These are skills that you will need to be able to live on your own successfully. They include things such as being able to buy food and cook meals for yourself within your weekly budget. Be able to keep yourself and your clothes clean, manage your money, travel to appointments, pay bills, arrange repairs etc. The more skills that you learn before you move into independent living the more choice that you will have about your housing options.

### How long will I have to wait for housing?

There is a long waiting list for some accommodation, and this means that you may not get your first-choice accommodation straight away.

Young people are usually offered shared accommodation and most of our accommodation is shared. We think that this is good because young people tell us it can be lonely living on their own.

Young people who are leaving care get a priority status for housing on the HSR but there can still be a long wait, because homeless young people get a priority too so it is important to plan early for independent living and practice your independent living skills to give you the widest range of choice.

### What happens if I am refused youth housing?

Occasionally young people are refused accommodation through the housing pathway. This may be because you have been asked to leave your previous accommodation or because sometimes it can be difficult to match a young person with the accommodation available. If this happens, the accommodation providers, social workers, personal advisers and other people who know you will work together to think about the options for you, for example extra support, or a referral to adult supported housing.

### What are my options when I am ready to move out of supported housing?

It is important that you use the time in supported accommodation to practice and learn all the skills you will need to live independently, this includes building a network of support from friends, family and the community as lots of people have told us it can be lonely to live on your own.

When you have the skills to live independently you will need to move and you will be supported to find somewhere either in social housing or private rental. Your worker (housing worker or personal adviser) can talk to you about which option might be best for you depending on your circumstances. It can take a long time (sometimes more than two years) to get a home through Home Choice Bristol (Home Choice Bristol which is the single application route to social housing in Bristol).

### What if I don't agree with the plans or want to talk to someone independent?

You have a right to be involved in all decisions about your plans and we encourage you to talk to your housing worker, personal adviser or social worker if you are not happy about your plans. However you have a right to an independent advocate if you want to challenge decisions about the support we give you.

For children in care or care leavers independent advocacy is available through Reconstruct <https://info.reconstruct.co.uk/bristolportal>

For other young people support can be accessed through the National Youth Advocacy Service <https://www.nyas.net/>