

**Your Housing Options Explained…**

Bristol City Council Children and Families Service are undertaking a social work assessment with you because you have told us that you may be homeless and need help and support with your housing.

Your social worker will meet with you and members of your network of family and friends to explore:

* Whether there is anywhere safe for you to live with your family or friends.
* What sort of support can be offered to enable you to return home to family or friends.
* Whether you are homeless, and if so, where you may need to live, who may need to look after you and what ongoing support you will need.

The assessment will usually take 5 weeks to complete. Sometimes assessments can take a little longer than this and sometimes they will be shorter.

If the assessment finds that you are homeless, there are two ways that we can help and support you with accommodation. One of these is through our homelessness team (known as “Part 7”) and one of these is through making you a child in care through our social work team (known as “section 20”). The difference between these two offers is described below. It is very important that you think carefully about this and tell your social worker about what you think is best for you. We can only offer accommodation to you under “section 20” if our assessment finds that you are a “Child in Need”. This is a legal term which means that you will need services to help and support you to achieve a reasonable standard of health and development. Most homeless 16 and 17 year olds will have additional support needs that fit this definition.

If you are homeless and in need of accommodation whilst the assessment is being undertaken, we will offer you housing under s.20 (detailed below), unless you tell us that you do not agree to become a child in our care. We will still try to explore options for you to live with your family or friends. If you still need accommodation at the end of the assessment, we will ask you which option you think is best for you in the long term.

**Your social worker is: ……………………………………………………………..**

**Their phone number is:……………………………………………………………**

**We gave you this document on: ………………………………………………**

Bristol have shared the outcome of our assessment with you and advised you what we consider would meet your needs.

If you have been assessed as needing accommodation and you are aged 16/17, you can agree with the Local Authority’s conclusion or make your own choice about the housing and support you receive

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| **If at the end of our assessment we find that you are no longer homeless or in need of accommodation:****You will not be offered accommodation but you will be offered support either from a social worker, our early help teams, youth MAPS or other agencies to make sure that any needs identified through the assessment are met.**  | **If at the end of our assessment we find that you are a homeless young person in need of accommodation, but that you are not also a Child in Need:** **You will be accommodated by the Housing Team under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996** | **If at the end of our assessment we find that you are a homeless young person who is also a “Child in Need”:****You can choose whether you wish to be housed and looked after under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 or housed under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996** |

**What Part 7 means….**

1. Bristol City Council’s Homelessness team will work with you to undertake a housing needs assessment and develop a personalised housing plan which will set steps you and your case officer will take to prevent or relieve homelessness.
2. We may provide you with accommodation which meets your needs and prevents you from being homeless. This is very likely to be supported accommodation.
3. If you are provided with supported accommodation, your support worker will be able to help you claim benefits to ensure that you receive a regular income to pay for your rent and will support you around your independent living skills
4. Your support worker will help you with money, budgeting, education, training, employment, accessing health services and learning to live independently in the community.
5. When you are able to live independently and confidently your support worker will assist you in finding your own accommodation, this may be further shared accommodation which may be within the private rented sector, as per the pathway agreement.
6. If you choose Part 7, you will be working with a support worker rather than a social worker and you will not become a “child in care” to the local authority. This means that the local authority do not undertake a parental role for you.

**What s.20 means….**

1. Bristol Children’s and Families Services will provide you with accommodation in a placement which meets your assessed needs. For example, it could be:
* With foster carers in a foster home
* In a children’s home
* In supported housing
* In supported lodgings with host families
1. This means you become a Child in Care to Bristol Children’s Services. You will have an allocated social worker who will write a care plan with you which will detail what support you need. Your social worker will meet with you regularly to support you to achieve the goals on your care plan, ensuring for example that you are in education, training or employment and that you are living a safe and healthy life. Children’s Services will assume a parental role for you.
2. You will have regular Child in Care review meetings, chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer, where you will meet with other professionals who might be supporting you based on your care plan
3. You will receive support for matters such as money, budgeting, education, accessing health services, building and maintaining your family, friend and social networks and learning to live independently in the community.
4. If you live in supported accommodation you will receive weekly financial support from children’s services. Because of this you will not be able to claim benefits until you are over 18.
5. If you remain a child in care (accommodated by the Local Authority) for more than 13 weeks from the age of 14 (including at least one day following your 16th birthday), and you do not return home to live with your family for more than six months, then you will become a Former Relevant Child at age 18. This means that at 18 you will have a:-
* *Personal Advisor* – a personal advisor’s role is to provide advice and support to you, to be involved with your Pathway Plan and co-ordinate services for you.
* *Pathway Plan* – This plan will be written with you and will set out how the Local Authority will meet your needs. For example how you will be supported to learn the skills to live independently.

This support is available until you are 25. Please search for our ‘local offer’ online at www.bristol.gov.uk/policies-plans-strategies/plans-and-policy-for-children-in-or-leaving-care which provides more detail as to how care leavers are supported.

For more details about whether you will be entitled to services after care as a further relevant child, please seek advice from your social worker or visit: <https://childlawadvice.org.uk/information-pages/services-for-children-leaving-care/>

**Need some advice?**

If you would like to talk to someone about these options, you can speak to an independent advocate about this decision.

If you are a child in care or a care leaver, you can access advocacy support through Reconstruct. You can contact Reconstruct yourself on 0800 389 1571, or your social worker can help you. You can find more information at: htttps://info.reconstruct.co.uk/bristolportal

Always Heard is an advocacy service for all run by Coram Voice. You can contact them via phone on 0808 800 5792, email help@coramvoice.org.uk or online <https://coramvoice.org.uk/young-peoples-zone/always-heard>

I confirm that I have discussed my housing options with a Social Worker and understand the different support available to me. Following this discussion, it is my preference to:

* Become looked after under s20 of the Children Act 1989
* Be housed under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996
* Decline the offer of accommodation

**Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**