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**Care Experienced Young People's Housing protocol**

Housing & Children's Services - Joint Working Arrangements

**Care Experienced Young People's Housing Protocol**

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1. ***Introduction***
   1. Portsmouth City Council recognises that as a corporate parent to our Looked After Children and Care Experienced Young People, we have a duty and responsibility to ensure they are prepared for their journey towards independent living and helped to make the best choices for themselves at the right time. It is recognised that not every young person is ready or wishes to leave their home at the same age and the variety of housing and support options we offer recognises this.
   2. In Portsmouth we strive to provide a range of all types of accommodation options that are available to young people post 18. These options are designed to be flexible and responsive to a young person's needs and enable them to make their journey to independence, with sufficient support and choices in order to make mistakes and learn from their experiences. The key to our wider housing pathway is flexibility and we aim to ensure that no young person is excluded permanently from all options available within that pathway.
2. ***Aims and objectives of the Protocol***
   1. In establishing this Protocol, we are setting out Portsmouth City Council's commitment to the ongoing provision and development of services to Care Experienced Young People (the local offer). We want to clearly define our responsibilities towards Care Experienced Young People, and the roles different professionals may have in ensuring these responsibilities are always met.
   2. We aim to identify how relevant services within Portsmouth City Council can, by working together, meet the needs of our Care Experienced Young People and fulfil the local authority's corporate responsibilities and statutory duties effectively, with full regard to government guidance and benchmarked good practice. Joint working as set out in this protocol will be led by our Supporting Your Future Team within Children's Services and the Housing Needs, Advice and Support team within the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Buildings directorate.
   3. We will provide a framework for services to cooperate and collaborate in their support of young people, helping them to transition successfully to a range of different accommodation settings suitable for their needs and meeting their aspirations.
   4. We will set out how professionals will continue to work together to ensure our Care Experienced Young People are supported to manage and sustain their housing, providing early, effective and joined-up interventions to prevent placement and tenancy breakdown.
   5. This will underpin our commitment to reducing instances or threats of homelessness for the young people we support, and the resultant need for them to access accommodation via a homeless application process, which we acknowledge must always be a last resort and an exceptional option for Care Experienced Young People in our city.
   6. We will commit to minimising and eliminating the use of unsuitable emergency placements, such as hotels and bed & breakfast accommodation, for Care Experienced Young People in crisis. We acknowledge such placements should only be used in exceptional and unavoidable circumstances and where all other options have been exhausted.
   7. The Protocol will therefore embed:
      * the processes for monitoring and reviewing the accommodation needs of Care Experienced Young People;
      * how Housing and Children's services will work together to advise Care Experienced Young People of their options and facilitate access to the right accommodation for them;
      * the role of Housing services in sourcing and providing accommodation for Care Experienced Young People, including secure tenancies where appropriate;
      * the processes in place to ensure Care Experienced Young People who are homeless or threatened with homelessness are fully supported, including the range of options available to them to ensure that they do not have to be accommodated in B&B or hotel placements;
      * a common resource of information, advice and referral processes for available housing options and service provision for young people;
      * the induction and training processes in place to ensure staff can provide the best advice and support for the young people this protocol is designed for
      * appropriate partnership working to ensure that the accommodation needs of young people entering and discharged from custody are adequately planned for.
3. ***The Corporate Parenting Principles***
   1. When exercising their functions in relation to children in care and Care Experienced Young People, all Portsmouth City Council services recognise and have regard to the seven Corporate Parenting principles identified in The Children & Social Work Act 2017. The seven principles are:
      * To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people;
      * To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
      * To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
      * To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
      * To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
      * For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
      * To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.
4. ***Who does this Protocol apply to?***
   1. Young people aged 16 to 25 who have housing or support needs and who have left or are due to leave the care of Portsmouth City Council.
   2. This Protocol also applies to Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers who are eligible for a leaving care service and have been granted refugee status, as per the Hillingdon Judgement (2003).
   3. Working with older Care Experienced Young People, and those who have returned to the service.
   4. The ultimate aim of our protocol and of all the work we do with young people leaving the care of our authority is to support them to leave successful and independent lives. Each Care Experienced Young Person may reach that point at a different age, and support will necessarily look different for every young person leaving the care of Portsmouth City Council. We recognise that some Care Experienced Young People may not want continuing contact with our service as they develop into independent adulthood.
   5. We also recognise that not all young people supported by our service will be successful in their transition to independence, and there may be those who are in need of further advice and assistance, as a result of a change in their circumstances, instability or breakdown of accommodation arrangements or other unforeseen challenges in their lives.
   6. We will ensure that any Care Experienced Young Person up to the age of 25 returning to our authority for further assistance will be fully supported by our service, being allocated a Personal Advisor who will work with them to review and update an assessment of their needs and aspirations, including consideration of all relevant options for accommodation and support as set out in this protocol
5. ***The importance of early planning and preparation***
   1. We recognise the importance of engaging young people early on in preparation for their transitions to the independence that comes with adulthood. We understand that successful planning involves a personalised and needs-led approach for young people, addressing both the practical "life skills" required to sustain accommodation and the emotional resilience that is needed to cope with the day-to-day challenges that more independent living brings.
   2. In Portsmouth our Supporting Your Future Team begins that dialogue with the young person at 16 years of age, including their foster carer or keyworker if they live in a residential setting. At this stage we would expect that foster carers /residential staff have already helped the young person develop some self-care skills such as doing their own washing, managing their own pocket money and saving up for things they want, possibly doing jobs for money such as household chores, and learning some basic cooking skills.
   3. We know that at 16, young people's views on living independently are varied. Some believe they can do very well without any form of parental presence but many are worried that they will not manage without some form of support. This discussion will be ongoing and reviewable between the Social Worker, the young person, their carer and their Independent Reviewing Officer from 16 onwards.
   4. The Independent Reviewing Officer advocates for the Looked after Child up until their 18th birthday when they have their final review. At this point the Independent Reviewing Officer will want to know that plans are in place for transition to more independent living and the young person has been sufficiently prepared for this stage of their life.
   5. At 16 ¾ each Looked after Child is allocated a Personal Advisor to work alongside their Social Worker. The Personal Advisor will attend all the Looked After Child reviews in order to understand the young person's journey though care, build a relationship with them and therefore be a familiar face when they transition at 18 from having a Social Worker to having a Personal Advisor.

* 1. When a young person who is looked after by Portsmouth City Council turns 17, we will offer them a meeting with their Personal Advisor and an officer from Housing Needs, Advice and Support (HNAS) to consider the range of future housing options available to them. At this meeting the HNAS Officer will explain the realities of living independently such as following a tenancy or licence agreement, the importance of paying rent and the consequences of not doing so.
  2. They will outline the different options available to the young person so they can think about what would work best for them and what level of personal responsibility they could manage. The Personal Advisor will then in conjunction with the Social Worker complete any necessary referral forms and processes required for facilitating those next steps identified.
  3. Therefore by the time of the final review, the young person should
     + feel fully informed about the responsibilities of living on their own and the options available to them
     + be able to reflect and identify some skills they already have to help them live on their own
     + and be clear what their next step will be in terms of where they will live.
  4. For some young people this will be to remain in their foster placement as part of a Staying Put arrangement.
  5. For those in a residential placement they will have the offer of a planned transition onto a Staying Close placement (see section 6).
  6. For those that would still like to feel part of family home or would like their meals provided they may choose Supported Lodgings (see section 6).
  7. The majority of Care Experienced Young People will choose to have their first taste of independent living whilst still receiving some support. This will be through the range of private, voluntary sector and local authority supported housing. This can range from 24/7 support in large, group-living settings to a shared house with floating support.
  8. The key feature of our offer to Care Experienced Young People is that it is flexible and so if one type of accommodation is not right for a young person they can move and try something else. If they are not ready for a high level of independence they can move to a more supported living environment in order to help them work on the skills and the behaviours they will need in the future to manage their own tenancy.
  9. Our aim is that all Care Experienced Young People will eventually have the responsibility of managing their own tenancy. This may be through Portsmouth City Council, a housing association or the private rental sector. The aim is that everyone is living somewhere they feel safe and able to thrive.

1. ***Helping Care Experienced Young People prepare for independence***
   1. In Portsmouth we have several ways that Care Experienced Young People are prepared for independence.
   2. **Foster Care:** carers are trained in developing life skills but more importantly are encouraged by their Supervising Social Worker and the young person's Social Worker to develop and encourage life skills development in the home as part of everyday life.
   3. Consultation with young people has told us that young people don’t want life skills work books in a family home - they want the same as non-care experienced children get which is things like being shown how to use the washing machine, getting pocket money for jobs, being encouraged to wash up, clean the bathroom after they use it etc. Once they are 16 and the conversations are regularly being had about when they do move on (if they are not Staying Put) they are happy to have to demonstrate their skills in return for an increased allowance.
   4. **Residential placements:** our Staying Close pilot evaluation report 2020[[1]](#footnote-1) found that young people leaving residential settings were not prepared well for living independently. The majority were developmentally behind their non-looked after peers and those in foster care, and needed a lot of support to manage and care for themselves.
   5. Building on this learning we have ensured that our children's homes have an effective life skills training programme in place from the age of 13. This is not a formal tool but a means by which we ensure that young people are given the opportunities to practice self-care, to contribute to communal living and work on their emotional regulation. It is based on a system known as the outcomes star where the young person measures their own progression and competency at completing certain self-care and life skills tasks.
   6. With our private residential providers we ensure within our contract management that each provider has a life skills programme.
   7. **Boost Life Skills Support Service:** The Supporting Your Future Team commissions a local organisation to provide a programme of housing-related and life skills support for 16-17yr old Looked After Children and Care Experienced Young People who may be accommodated in a variety of different placement arrangements. The support takes the form of a 'Workbook to Independence" delivered by an allocated Boost keyworker, with a focus on preparing young people for transition to more independent housing arrangements through development in five areas: money management, health and wellbeing, life skills, housing and community, and employment and training.
   8. **'TASLYP' (Temporary Accommodation Service for Looked After Young People):** linked to the Boost life skills support programme is the TASLYP offer. This is an opportunity for 16/17yr old Looked After Children and Care Experienced Young People to experience an independent housing arrangement in the community for the first time, whilst receiving regular support from their Boost keyworker. A temporary placement of up to six weeks is available in self-contained accommodation owned by Portsmouth City Council. Young people placed will receive at least three visits per week from their keyworker and the Boost team to work on life skills and the Workbook to Independence.
   9. Young people are expected to pay a small service charge, gas, electricity and they also need to budget for their weekly food.  This is an excellent way for young people to learn responsibilities and what is meant by being a good tenant.
   10. The benefits of the TASLYP flats are that they enable the young person to gain new skills, confidence and to have a better idea about the challenges of living on their own and being a tenant.  The TASLYP flats also demonstrate areas where the young person still needs support in order to be better prepared for when they leave care.
   11. The Boost Life Skills Support and TASLYP services are accessed by direct referral to the provider by a young person's Social Worker or personal advisor.
   12. **Peer Mentoring (Flying Solo):** Flying Solo is a local Portsmouth charity that was set up by Care Experienced Young People to support Care Experienced Young People run a range of mentoring schemes to support Care Experienced Young People in their daily lives. These range from peer on peer mentoring for Care Experienced Young People that might be struggling with the pressures of their lives and need someone who understands their challenges,  through to business and job mentors in partnership with shaping Portsmouth for any Care Experienced Young People that need support getting into work or starting their own businesses
2. ***Accommodation options for Care Experienced Young People in need of support***
   1. Portsmouth City Council provides a range of options for young people moving on from foster care or residential settings. There is a variety of different settings available, from group living environments to self-contained accommodation where a young person may live on their own, and a range of options and levels of support that can be provided to meet their needs.
   2. A map of the different options available, including indicative levels of support/staffing and level of independence offered, is included in the appendices at the end of this protocol.
   3. **The role of the Independent Supported Housing Assessor:** within Housing Needs, Advice and Support the personalised approach is enabled through the use of Independent Supported Housing Assessors. These officers provide a flexible and specialist resource for the service which supports an effective and ongoing understanding of young people's housing and support needs, and the multi-agency working and arrangements that underpin this. The Independent Supported Housing Assessor role has been successfully embedded into Housing Needs, Advice and Support, and the supported housing pathways it commissions, having been introduced in April 2019.
   4. The Independent Supported Housing Assessor will provide comprehensive support plans and risk assessments for all young people referred for supported housing, identifying which element is most appropriate to meet each young person's needs. Where appropriate and necessary, the Independent Supported Housing Assessor will coordinate this alongside any statutory homeless support being required/provided from the Housing Needs, Advice and Support service, linking in with the young person's allocated Housing Advice and Assessment Officer case holder, and supporting and informing the personalised housing plan (see section 10).
   5. **HNAS-commissioned supported accommodation:** Housing Needs, Advice and Support commissions supported accommodation for young people who are threatened with homelessness or in significant housing need in the city. The accommodation offer comprises three hostel-type services with varying levels of staff cover and support: All Saints and Portsmouth Foyer, located in the city centre, and Victoria Rd South in Southsea. In total this amounts to 84 beds in the city.
   6. It is "general-needs" supported accommodation and therefore Care Experienced Young People and Looked After Children are not the only groups of young people eligible to be referred; indeed, the majority of young people living in our hostels have not been in the care system. Placements within this housing pathway are accessed by referral to Housing Needs, Advice and Support and a needs assessment by the Independent Supported Housing Assessor.
   7. HNAS also commissions hostel-based supported accommodation for adults (aged 18-65) who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, and this may be an additional option to consider when looking at accommodation solutions for Care Experienced Young People who are in urgent housing need.
   8. HNAS can also provide advice and signposting guidance for eligibility and referral processes to access more specialist supported accommodation pathways in Portsmouth, such as those which are commissioned to provide additional support around mental health or substance misuse. Again, this may be a relevant housing option to explore for some young people with additional or complex needs.
   9. **'Boost Plus' supported housing scheme:** also linked to the Boost life skills support offer and TASLYP service (see section 6) is the Boost Plus scheme, providing supported sublet tenancies for Portsmouth Care Experienced Young People. This builds on the preparatory work offered by the Boost service, with a view to providing young people with tenancy and life skills support to manage the transition to independent living in their own self-contained accommodation.
   10. At any one time the scheme can support up to ten young people in local authority accommodation provided by the Housing directorate and sublet to the young person via the provider with an assured shorthold tenancy agreement.
   11. Boost Plus clients will receive several hours' support each week from their keyworker, continuing to develop and embed the skills and support identified through the Workbook to Independence . Young people may be supported by the scheme for anything between six months to two years. Upon successful engagement and completion of the support plan, the property can then be signed over to the Care Experienced Young Person as a fully secure council tenancy, enabling to them to retain it as a long-term, settled home.
   12. Placements within this housing pathway, and all Boost services are accessed by the Personal Advisor making a referral to the commissioned provider of the scheme. The Supporting Your Future Team meets with the provider and Housing Needs, Advice and Support on a bi-monthly basis to consider placement capacity and the waiting list for the scheme, and to coordinate future accommodation provision as required.
   13. **The Staying Close Project:** the Staying Close project provides young people with accommodation and an intensive support package tailored to their needs, including therapeutic support, to enable them to develop these skills through experiential learning and self-advocacy.
   14. Each young person who is referred to the project meets with their designated Personal Advisor and a CAMHs practitioner to have an individual assessment of their needs. They also work with the Personal Advisor and the Educational Psychologists to develop their own PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope). This is an interactive assessment model which encourages young people to focus on their dreams and ambitions and from there break these down into achievable goals. The PATH then forms the basis for their support plan when they move to Staying Close.
   15. The project has a range of accommodation types but will include some facilities which are shared. Support levels will vary across the provision and according to identified need; young people have weekly key work sessions to support them with their life skills development and achievement of the aims of their PATH, and a quarterly skills assessment including identification and planning for suitable move on to more independent housing.
   16. **Aspiration Supported Housing:** with support from the Housing Business Partner (see section 8), we have worked together to secure three properties in Portsmouth, leased from private owners, which are offered as shared move-on housing for Care Experienced Young People (aged 18-25). The service replicates the support model developed by the Staying Close project, with support levels varying across the portfolio and offered to young people to meet identified need in a person-centred way.
   17. **Commissioned private providers**: there are a range of unregulated private supported housing providers in the city offering small group living in shared houses for 16/17 yr old LAC and Care Experienced Young People up to the age of 25. Most placements available are in single gender settings, with young people being "matched" to placements based on suitability. Support can vary from more intensive provision where staff are available on site up to 24 hours per day, to daily or weekly visiting outreach support; placements; support is commissioned on a case-by-case basis by Supporting Your Future Team to meet individual identified need. This option may provide a flexible and supportive arrangement for some Care Experienced Young People who are able to manage with some level of independence, but do not suit other provision such as hostel-type accommodation.
   18. **Supported Lodgings placements:** there are supported lodgings available for Care Experienced Young People who may suit a placement where they are living in a privately-owned home as a lodger, in safe accommodation where they may still access support from the homeowner/provider. Young people will have their own bedroom in the house and will be provided with meals (or food and access to kitchen facilities) and will typically be expected to make a rental contribution towards the cost of the accommodation. Support from the homeowner will complement the support available from the young person's personal advisor and could cover a range of areas which will help the the young person develop their independence, such as cooking and healthy eating; using a washing machine; budgeting; completing applications forms; studying, seeking education, training or employment.
3. ***Independent living options***
   1. It is our aim to support all our Care Experienced Young People to develop the life skills, resilience and understanding to be able to live independently, although we recognise that for some this may take longer to achieve. There are a number of ways we can support young people to secure independent housing when they are ready for this.
   2. **Direct nomination to the City Council waiting list:**  The Supporting Your Future Team is able to nominate ten Care Experienced Young People each year to be housed through the city's housing register with priority. This is an appropriate option for young people who are fully able to manage independent living, are engaged in meaningful use of their time and who have a clear housing need. Placements within this housing pathway are accessed by referral to Housing Needs, Advice and Support and a needs assessment by the Independent Supported Housing Assessor.
   3. There is an agreed set of criteria for suitable nominations (see appendix, "CRITERIA FOR DIRECT NOMINATION TO PCC HOUSING (CARE EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE)"). The Supporting Your Future Team meets with Housing Needs, Advice and Support on a bi-monthly basis to consider placement capacity and the waiting list for the scheme, and to coordinate future accommodation provision as required.
   4. Care Experienced Young People may be assessed as eligible to join Portsmouth City Council's social housing register for other reasons, based on any relevant housing need assessed against the city's Allocations Policy criteria. This may be an option to explore for some young people. A link to the Allocations Policy can be found in section 15 of this Protocol.
   5. **Private sector assured shorthold tenancies (ASTs) - shared houses or self-contained accommodation:** there is an active private rented sector in Portsmouth comprising both self-contained flats and bedsits, and shared houses. Private sector tenancies (ASTs) are more secure than resident landlord arrangements, with clear legislation in place defining tenants' rights, appropriate notice periods and landlords' responsibilities.
   6. Demand for private accommodation is high and suitable accommodation can be expensive to secure, with rents often higher than the normal applicable housing-related welfare support level (Housing Benefit/Universal Credit housing element) and additional funds potentially required for rent advances and deposits. Landlords will also frequently seek a rent guarantor.
   7. It is important to ensure that Care Experienced Young People wishing to access private accommodation in the city are supported and informed about all aspects of private renting and particularly to consider the affordability and sustainability of any tenancy proposed (see section 9).
   8. **The Private Rented Sector (PRS) team within HNAS:** there is a dedicated team within the Housing Needs, Advice and Support service that sources private sector housing, working with landlords and consortiums to procure accommodation to meet the customer demand on the service. The team can also support customers with financial assistance around rent deposits, rent in advance and tenancy affordability. The team is available to support Care Experienced Young People who are able to manage a private tenancy independently. Referrals are made via the HNAS and those with an identified housing need are prioritised.
   9. Financial support is available from the Supporting Your Future Team for Care Experienced Young People assessed as ready to live independently, and who require help with the initial costs of setting up home. This includes a grant to help with furnishing a new home, potential assistance with rent deposits and other costs on a discretionary basis. (See appendix ; 'Care Experienced Young Person Financial Offer')
   10. **The role of the Housing Business Partner:** the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Buildings directorate has provided a Business Partner who supports the Supporting Your Future Team and other teams within Children's services to procure accommodation from the private sector, most commonly by using leasing arrangements, and with further support offered around property management services.
   11. This has proved to be an invaluable resource enabling the council to broaden the scope of our accommodation offer in a proactive and flexible way, to respond to specific needs and particularly where more common models of housing provision are not appropriate (such as accommodation for young people who do not yet have Leave to Remain confirmed, and are therefore precluded from having their own tenancy by the provisions of the Immigration Act 2014).
4. ***Continuing support for Care Experienced Young People living independently***
   1. Where a young person has secured their own accommodation in the community, or is looking to find housing such as a private sector tenancy, it is crucial that they continue to be provided with appropriate advice and support. This will ensure that the accommodation located is affordable for that young person and they have the best possible chance of sustaining it in the longer term.
   2. There are a number of commitments we will make to our Care Experienced Young People to support them in independent living arrangements:
   3. The Personal Advisor will always offer practical financial advice in advance of any tenancy beginning, including an assessment with the young person of their income and expenditure and support to ensure they are in full receipt of any welfare benefit entitlement. This will support maximisation of income and establish whether the accommodation is affordable and if the young person may require any targeted budgeting work.
   4. The Personal Advisor will also support the young person to register for all required utilities, offering further assistance to explore the market for preferable tariffs or deals which will ensure best value for money. Where possible this should be completed within 14 days of the young person signing the tenancy agreement. The Personal Advisor will ensure the young person is aware about when they can expect their first bills, and how frequently these will come in future. Again, this may then be supported with further targeted budgeting support in follow up.
   5. Where possible and with the consent of the young person, alternative payment arrangements will be explored and arranged, such as direct housing-related benefits payments to the landlord.
   6. Care Experienced Young People in Portsmouth are exempted for paying council tax until their 25th birthday. Personal Advisors will liaise with the Finance and Revenues service within Portsmouth City Council to ensure exemptions are appropriately registered and actioned on relevant systems. Where possible this should be completed within 14 days of the young person signing the tenancy agreement.
   7. Where possible and with the consent of the young person, their Personal Advisor or other designated professional from the Supporting Your Future Team will accompany them to any property viewing, tenancy agreement sign up, to meet their new landlord or housing officer, or to any similar appointment related to their housing.
   8. The Personal Advisor will seek consent from the young person to contact their new landlord, to make themselves available as a potential point of contact going forward and to help support the ongoing success of the tenancy, and any intervention to address problems early on.
   9. The young person's pathway plan will be reviewed and updated within 28 days of moving, to reflect their new accommodation and any further actions and support needs identified.
   10. Where it has become clear that a young person may be struggling to sustain their tenancy, the Personal Advisor will consider what additional support and intervention is required to help bring things back on track. This might involve direct work with the landlord, referral to the Citizens' Advice Bureau, or other services including Housing Needs, Advice and Support.
   11. Where it has become clear that the tenancy may be at risk of failing, for instance due to rent arrears or behavioural breaches, and therefore that the young person may be at risk of homelessness in the near future, the Personal Advisor will make referral to Housing Needs, Advice & Support (see section 10; The Duty to Refer). This referral is to be made as soon as the Personal Advisor becomes aware of a potential threat of homelessness within 56 days to the young person.
   12. A young person who wishes to leave their tenancy will be offered support to ensure the property is handed back to the landlord in a managed way, minimising the risk of outstanding rent arrears owed or significant property damage for which the young person may remain liable. The Personal Advisor will make every effort to ensure the young person has appropriate alternative accommodation arranged and available to them before they relinquish their tenancy; thereby minimising the risk of emergency accommodation placement being required or the potential for a decision of intentional homelessness, which might impact on future housing prospects and options for that young person.
5. ***Help to prevent and relieve homelessness*** 
   1. Young people leaving care are some of the most vulnerable in society. Missing the support and safety net commonly provided by parents or other close family, many will struggle to adapt to independent life. A poor transition to adulthood places a person at increased risk of poor accommodation sustainment and homelessness.
   2. It is important to ensure that services in Portsmouth are working together to ensure early and effective support and interventions are available to Care Experienced Young People to prevent homelessness. Where homelessness cannot be prevented it is then vital to ensure that appropriate and timely support is made available to minimise the risk of young people being placed in unsuitable temporary accommodation such as hotels and bed & breakfast establishments.
   3. **Weekly Multi-disciplinary Housing Meeting for Care Experienced Young People:** central to our strategy for preventing homelessness for Care Experienced Young People and ensuring timely and targeted interventions are made is the weekly Care Experienced Young Person housing meeting, which has been successfully embedded within working processes within Portsmouth City Council.
   4. The meeting brings together an experienced multi-disciplinary network, including team managers, commissioning officers and frontline practitioners from Housing Needs, Advice and Support, the Supporting Your Future Team and Adult Social Care.
   5. The group considers referrals for the following:
      * Care Experienced Young People whose placement is at risk of breaking down
      * Care Experienced Young People had fixed notice service (possible eviction)
      * Care Experienced Young People with no suitable housing, such as sofa surfing or rough sleeping
      * Care Experienced Young People who are due for release from YOI / Prison
      * Any Care Experienced Young Person placed in temporary accommodation
   6. The meeting will support reflection on issues causing concern for accommodation and placement stability. The group will offer a different lens and contribute to discussion regarding different ways of working to support young people, therefore sharing the wealth of knowledge and experience across the meeting.
   7. The group will agree a plan of support and identify key actions for practitioners moving forward in support of the young person discussed, such as support to engage with a homeless application process, submit a duty to refer notification, arrange a professionals' meeting etc.
   8. All young people in Bed & Breakfast accommodation and all custodial releases will be reviewed at this meeting, thereby providing stringent oversight that plans are progressing to resolve their homelessness.
   9. **The Duty to Refer:** Children's services including the Supporting Your Future Team are among the public bodies obliged by section 213B of the Housing Act 1996 to notify the Housing Needs, Advice and Support service of anyone they believe to be homeless or threatened with homelessness with 56 days.
   10. The 'duty to refer' notification can be satisfied by the Supporting Your Future Team providing Housing Needs, Advice and Support with the name and contact details of the Care Experienced Young Person who is threatened with homelessness, however we encourage our staff to provide as much information as possible so that there is the best opportunity to provide early and meaningful interventions to prevent and relieve homelessness.
   11. Such detail would be in relation to the circumstances leading to the loss of accommodation, and around the specific housing and support needs of the individual (with the consent of the individual where appropriate; see section 9).
   12. Likewise, earlier referrals are more likely to result in a threat of homelessness being prevented. Staff should refer an young person to Housing Needs, Advice and Support upon being aware of there being a threat of homelessness within 56 days..
   13. Housing Needs, Advice and Support is a signatory to the Hampshire-wide duty to refer protocol. Referrals to any housing authority in the county can therefore be made by using the same form[[2]](#footnote-2).
   14. For referrals to Portsmouth City Council's housing team, the completed referral form should be emailed to [dutytorefer@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:dutytorefer@portsmouthcc.gov.uk). Alternatively a referral can be made by phone using the main contact number for Housing Needs, Advice and Support, which is 023 9283 4989.
   15. A 'duty to refer' referral can be made to any local authority in England, according to the wishes of the person threatened with homelessness. It would usually be prudent for a referral to be made to a local authority to whom the person has a local connection though, to maximise the help they will be entitled to and to avoid the application be referred on to another local authority.
   16. **Local connection:** this has a specific meaning in homelessness law; Housing Needs, Advice and Support are able to advise whether a person might be considered to have a local connection to a given area. Simplified examples of what might constitute a local connection are as follows:
       * A person has lived in Portsmouth for 6 out of the last 12 months or for 3 out of the last 5 years and that residence has been 'residence of choice'
       * A person works in Portsmouth
       * A person has close family members who have lived in Portsmouth for at least 5 years
       * A person owed leaving care duties by Portsmouth City Council under section 23C of the Children Act 1989
       * Where a Care Experienced Young Person aged under 21 normally lives in a different area to that of a local authority that owes them leaving care duties, and has done for at least 2 years including some time before they turned 16, they will also have a local connection in that area
   17. **Receipt of referral:** upon receiving notification of a Care Experienced Young Person being apparently threatened with homelessness, Housing Needs, Advice and Support may make some preliminary enquiries to satisfy itself that there is indeed a genuine threat of homelessness and/or that the young person in question is eligible for assistance according to their nationality, immigration status etc.
   18. Care Experienced Young People who would be considered eligible for assistance under homeless legislation, and therefore able to make a homeless application, include
       * British or Irish Citizenship
       * Settled status from the EU settlement scheme, and some individuals with pre-settled status
       * Indefinite leave to remain (ILR)
       * Refugee status or humanitarian protection
   19. Evidence of habitual residence is also required for the purposes of making a homeless application. Habitual residence means that the person is living in the Common Travel Area (CTA) - the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, Channel Islands and the Isle of Man - and intends to continue living in the CTA for the foreseeable future.
   20. If there is reason to believe the Care Experienced Young Person might be eligible for assistance and that there might be a threat of homelessness, an appointment will be offered with a Housing Assessment and Advice Officer for a full assessment to be carried out. If the person is already homeless or the threat of homelessness is due to materialise before the next available appointment, they will be offered to be seen by a duty Housing Advice and Assessment Officer on the day.
   21. No Care Experienced Young Person will be asked to make a homeless application or attend a housing assessment appointment without support from their Social Worker or Personal Advisor.
   22. **The assessment and personalised housing plan:** once satisfied that a Care Experienced Young Person is eligible for assistance and either homeless or threatened with homelessness, Housing Needs, Advice and Support will carry out an assessment and look to agree a personalised housing plan (PHP) with them.
   23. Housing Needs, Advice and Support's assessment should be holistic and must include the following elements:
       * The circumstances that cause the person to be homeless or threatened with homelessness
       * The housing needs of the person, including what type of accommodation would be considered suitable for them
       * What support would be necessary for the person to have and retain suitable accommodation
   24. Upon becoming aware of a Care Experienced Young Person aged between 18 and 25 who is homeless or threatened with homelessness, Housing Needs, Advice and Support should inform the Supporting Your Future Team, with consent. The person's Personal Advisor should be offered the opportunity to contribute to the assessment.
   25. The assessment should inform the subsequent PHP: a document, ideally agreed with the young person, setting out the actions the local authority agrees to take and the actions the young person agrees to take in order to prevent or relieve their homelessness.
   26. The plan should be informed by the section 23C Pathway Plan, subject to consent from the young person, and the Personal Advisor should be offered the opportunity to contribute to the agreed steps and may be assigned steps to take as part of the plan.
   27. If Housing Needs, Advice and Support have concerns that a Care Experienced Young Person may not be cooperating with the agreed/required steps set out in their PHP, this should be shared with the Personal Advisor so that joint, early action can be taken to remind the person of the possible consequences of doing so.
   28. **Specific considerations for Care Experienced Young People:** a person under 21 who was looked after between the ages of 16 and 18 will be in priority need. When assessing whether a Care Experienced Young Person aged 21 or over is in priority need, Housing Needs, Advice and Support must consider whether they are vulnerable as a result of being looked after, accommodated or fostered. To make this determination, it will usually be appropriate for Housing Needs, Advice and Support to consider factors such as the following:
       * The length of time that the young person was looked after, accommodated or fostered
       * The reasons why they were looked after, accommodated or fostered
       * The length of time since the young person left care, and whether they have been able to obtain and maintain accommodation during any of that period
       * Whether the young person has any existing support networks, particularly including family, friends or a mentor
       * Whether, if homeless, the young person would be at particular risk of exploitation, abuse or involvement in offending behaviour as a result of having been looked after, accommodated or fostered
   29. **Temporary accommodation for homeless Care Experienced Young People:** in the event that homelessness cannot be prevented and interim accommodation is required, HNAS will work with the Care Experienced Young Person's Social Worker or Personal Advisor to secure suitable temporary accommodation. Where possible, placement in Portsmouth will be secured before anything is considered outside of the city, although it is acknowledged that this may not be possible in all instances and in some occasions a placement further away may be of benefit for other reasons.
   30. Hotels and bed & breakfast establishments are unsuitable for Care Experienced Young People and should only be used in exceptional circumstances, and for short periods and where there are no alternative options available.
   31. There are a number of alternative temporary accommodation options which are more suitable to safely meet the housing needs of homeless Care Experienced Young People, and which may be available depending on the wider demand on the HNAS service. These options should always be explored where appropriate and in preference to accommodation in a hotel or B&B:
       * CFE-funded emergency placement (EP) bed at All Saints Hostel (commissioned supported accommodation for young people)
       * Fast-tracked referral to core provision within HNAS-commissioned supported housing services
       * Self-contained supported temporary accommodation for homeless individuals and families in priority need ('TAS' service)
       * Commissioned supported temporary accommodation for homeless individuals and couples not considered to be in priority need (the Rough Sleeping Support Service/ accommodation pathway)
   32. Where placement in a hotel or B&B is unavoidable for a Care Experienced Young Person, their Personal Advisor will work with HNAS and any other agencies involved to ensure there is an appropriate package of support wrapped around the young person to minimise any detrimental impact of the temporary placement on them, and to help them sustain the placement until such time that more suitable accommodation is secured. Support planning and joint working will also focus on the onward housing plan, ensuring that the young person's placement in bed & breakfast is limited to the shortest possible time period.

The Personal Advisor will ensure that any young person placed in a hotel or bed & breakfast setting is added to the agenda for the weekly multi-disciplinary Care Experienced Young Person housing meeting to ensure ongoing oversight and support of the work to support them with their housing and secure an appropriate move on to more suitable accommodation.

* 1. **Care Experienced Young People leaving custody:** any Care Experienced Young Person likely to require accommodation support following release from a custodial setting will be subject to the duty to refer notification process (10.10). A coordinated approach between the young person's Social Worker or Personal Advisor, prison and probation services and the HNAS will be needed to ensure that a referral is made as early as possible prior to release, and ideally at least 56 days in advance (although for Care Experienced Young People serving shorter sentences this may not be realistic). This will enable the best opportunity to plan so that the young person has appropriate accommodation available to them on the day of their release.
  2. At the same time, the young person will be referred to the weekly Care Experienced Young Person housing meeting by their Social Worker or Personal Advisor, ensuring there is oversight of accommodation planning in this forum in preparation for the date of release.
  3. The allocated Social Worker or Personal Advisor and an appropriate officer from HNAS will attend any pre-release planning meetings convened concerning the young person, such as probation professionals' meetings or MAPPA conferences.
  4. **Intentional homelessness:** when assessing whether a Care Experienced Young Person is intentionally homeless within the context of the Housing Act 1996, Housing Needs, Advice and Support should consider their emotional and mental wellbeing, maturity, and general ability to understand the impact of their actions. The views of the Supporting Your Future Team will be considered when carrying out this assessment.
  5. Due to the impact a negative decision can have on a Care Experienced Young Person, if it is likely a decision of intentional homelessness is to be made, then a meeting between that young person, their Personal Advisor and Housing Advice and Assessment Officer will be offered to provide further advice and support, ensuring the young person is made aware of what to expect next and what their options may be.
  6. **Care Experienced Young People who are rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping**: there are specific services commissioned by Portsmouth City Council to support people who are rough sleeping or at risk of doing so. These include outreach services, rough sleeping navigator workers, a daytime rough sleeping drop-in service 'hub' and accommodation pathway.
  7. As with any homeless Care Experienced Young Person, consideration should be given to the duty to refer notification (10.10) and whether there is an immediate duty to accommodate under s.188 Housing Act 1996 (see flowchart). However, a Social Worker, Personal Advisor or any other connected professional working with the young person should also consider referral to commissioned rough sleeping services which can be made via the HNAS or by contacting the Rough Sleeping Hub directly by email to [portsmouth.dayservices@ssj.org.uk](mailto:portsmouth.dayservices@ssj.org.uk) or telephone which is **023 9288 2689**.
  8. The flowchart below provides further guidance on the homeless duties owed to Care Experienced Young People, and the way services should work together to support them.

A picture containing timeline

Description automatically generated

1. ***Information sharing***
   1. In order to provide the most effective service for Care Experienced Young People, information will be shared among partners of the protocol and other relevant key partner agencies.
   2. We will agree to work together to offer an effective service to young people leaving care in Portsmouth. Where appropriate and in the interest of the young person not having to repeat their life story, we will share information safely, securely and with consent from that young person.
   3. In all cases we will provide every young person supported with a copy of the relevant privacy notice detailing how information is going to be used in order to provide them with the service they need.
2. ***Managing and resolving disputes***
   1. From time to time disputes may arise around how a young person is being supported, whether that work is compliant with the Protocol or other relevant areas of policy or law.
   2. In all matters, frontline professionals from Housing and Children's Services are encouraged to work together to achieve a shared understanding and agree a resolution plan that is realistic and is appropriate for the needs of the young person.
   3. If professionals are not able to resolve differences the presenting issues should be escalated first to direct team managers.
   4. If concerns remained unresolved the relevant heads of service for the Supporting Your Future Team and Housing (either Housing Needs, Advice & Support service or Local Authority Housing Management service) will meet to discuss the case and agree an appropriate resolution, sharing lessons learned with relevant professionals and identifying adjustments to future service delivery where required.
   5. Housing Needs, Advice and Support offers an independent review process for decisions made by its officers in respect of homeless and housing register applications and this may be the most appropriate means of appeal and redress. Young people should be provided with advice about this process and with support to access independent advocacy, where required.
   6. Portsmouth City Council's corporate complaints policy is also available for young people to access, should they wish, and they should be provided with advice about this process and with support to access independent advocacy, where required. Children's services also offers its own complaints process specific to children and adults who are supported by them. Further details of this process should be made available to young people and further support to access independent advocacy should be offered, where required.
3. ***Implementation, monitoring and review of the Protocol***
   1. It is the ongoing responsibility of team managers and heads of service within Housing and Children's services to ensure the Protocol is being consistently implemented and that all staff and young people have access to it.
   2. The Protocol will be cascaded to key staff in Housing and Children's services including relevant team managers and frontline workers such as Social Workers, Personal Advisors and Housing Advice and Assessment Officers. The introduction of the Protocol will be supported by brief training sessions/presentations, such as those delivered to team meetings, and reference tools including one minute guides.
   3. Moving forward, training in and familiarisation with the Protocol will be an essential part of induction processes for all new members of staff in key roles working with Care Experienced Young People, such as those mentioned above.
   4. The Protocol will be reviewed on a regular (at least every two quarters) basis by officers at the weekly Care Experienced Young People' housing meeting, and annually by the Care Experienced Young People' Steering Group. This will ensure the accuracy and relevance of information and processes referred to within the Protocol, and its wider strategic context.
   5. The ongoing implementation and review of the Protocol will be further supported at a strategic level by Portsmouth City Council's Corporate Parenting Board. The Corporate Parenting Board leads and supports all corporate parenting activity of the Council and its partner organisations and has wide representation including elected members and officers. It acts as a leadership, advisory and consultative body to the Council and its partners, providing challenge to ensure that Corporate Parenting duties are carried out effectively and consistently. The Corporate Parenting Board will therefore have ultimate responsibility for Council services and their partners to account in the delivery of the Protocol, and the performance of their wider corporate parenting responsibilities.
   6. The Children in Care Council (CiCC) is made up of young people who are all cared for by Portsmouth City Council. It gives children and young people the chance to shape and influence the support and services they receive at every level.
4. ***Relevant law and guidance***
   1. Our Protocol has been designed with full regard to the relevant legislative and policy framework that underpins the provision of advice, support and resources for Care Experienced Young People.
   2. **The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000** ("CLCA 2000") and **the Homelessness Act 2002** ("HA 2002") are designed to ensure that local authority Children's Social Care and housing departments work together to ensure that the accommodation needs of Care Experienced Young People are met, including particularly those who have a priority need status for accommodation.
   3. The HA 2002 stipulates that a young person has a priority need for accommodation if he or she is:
      * A person under 21 who was (but is no longer) Looked After by the local authority between the ages of 16 and 18 (except relevant students)
      * A person aged 21 or more who is vulnerable as a result of having been Looked After by the local authority.
   4. Further to this, **the Homeless Reduction Act 2017** ('HRA 2017") places additional duties on local authorities to prevent the homelessness of all individuals and families seeking assistance, regardless of priority need, who are eligible for assistance and threatened with homelessness within 56 days.
   5. The HRA 2017 also requires local authorities to provide each person seeking assistance, due to being homeless/threatened with homelessness, a personalised housing plan (PHP) which identifies clear actions to prevent or relieve that homelessness. The PHP should be bespoke to the individual, taking account of their particular needs and circumstances and making all reasonable efforts to engage their cooperation.
   6. The C(LC)A 2000 Regulations and Guidance also detail how the local authority strategy for Care Experienced Young People should take into account:
      * The diverse accommodation and support needs of Care Experienced Young People;
      * The capacity to offer young people a degree of choice of accommodation;
      * Existing and planned provision of safe, affordable accommodation;
      * Gaps in provision;
      * Priority setting;
      * The need for contingency arrangements.
   7. **The Children and Social Work Act 2017** sets out the seven Corporate Parenting principles for Local Authorities to recognise and embody through their functions and service delivery to children and young people in care or leaving care. It requires local authorities to publish their local offer to Care Experienced Young People and to appoint personal advisors to provide advice and support to all Care Experienced Young People up to the age of 25, except those who no longer wish to be provided with this service.
   8. More generally**,** the provisions within the **Children Act 1989** and the **Housing Act 1996** are also relevant to this Protocol, as are the following government guidance documents:
   9. The Homeless Code of Guidance for Local Authorities - Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities - Guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
   10. Applying Corporate Parenting Principles to looked after children and Care Experienced Young People - [Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and Care Experienced Young People (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683698/Applying_corporate_parenting_principles_to_looked-after_children_and_care_leavers.pdf)
   11. Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations Volume 2: care planning and case review - [The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1000549/The_Children_Act_1989_guidance_and_regulations_Volume_2_care_planning__placement_and_case_review.pdf)
   12. Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations Volume 3: planning transition to adulthood for Care Experienced Young People - [DfE (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1051441/CA1989_Transitions_Guidance.pdf)
   13. Extending Personal Advisor support for all Care Experienced Young People to age 25 - [Extending Personal Adviser support to all Care Experienced Young People to age 25 (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683701/Extending_Personal_Adviser_support_to_all_care_leavers_to_age_25.pdf)
   14. Local Offer guidance - [Local offer guidance (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683703/Local_offer_guidance_final.pdf)
5. ***Links to further information***
   1. Details of Portsmouth City Council's Local Care Experienced Young Person Offer: [Care Experienced Young People Offer pack Appendix 2.pdf (portsmouth.gov.uk)](https://democracy.portsmouth.gov.uk/documents/s20930/Care%20Leavers%20Offer%20pack%20Appendix%202.pdf)
   2. Details of the OFSTED framework and guidance for inspecting local authority services for children in need of help and protection, children in care and care experienced young people [Inspecting local authority children's services from 2018 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-local-authority-childrens-services-from-2018)
   3. A link to further information about Portsmouth City Council's social housing waiting list, including information about the housing allocations policy and how applications are assessed: [Housing waiting list - Portsmouth City Council](https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/services/housing/looking-for-a-home/housing-waiting-list/)

**APPENDICES**

* Care Experienced Young Person Accommodation Map
* Care Experienced Young Person direct nomination eligibility criteria
* Supported housing referral form
* Care Experienced Young Person Rent Deposit Scheme

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1. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/childrens-social-care-innovation-programme-insights-and-evaluation> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/hampshire-homelessness-referral-form.doc> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)