

Support for Homeless Young People

A Guide for Young People aged 16 and 17 who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless

This information leaflet has been given to you because you are 16 or 17, you can't live at home with your parents or carers, and you are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

You don't need to be sleeping on the street to be homeless. If you are staying somewhere that is not safe for you, or you are staying somewhere where you don't have the legal right to stay, you could be considered as homeless. This includes sleeping on a friend's sofa or in their spare room for the short term.

This guide explains:

- **The help that you are entitled to by law**
- **Where to go to get help**
- **The different options and what they mean.**

Here are some examples of why you might be classed as homeless, it does not include all scenarios.

- you have nowhere to live;
- you are staying in temporary accommodation such as a hostel, bed and breakfast, hotel or squat;
- you cannot stay in your home because of violence or the threat of violence;
- you are staying temporarily with friends or relatives;
- you have somewhere to stay but it is not reasonable to expect you to stay there.

It's important to know that you can also be classed as homeless if you are likely to become homeless within 56 days.



Where can I go for help?

Not knowing where you are going to live is daunting and scary, but it's important to know you are not alone and you will get help to find somewhere safe to stay.

The law says that your local council (the Local Authority) must help you. Your Local Authority is **Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council**.

If you approach Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council for help, you will be in contact with staff from **Children's Services** and the **Housing Advice & Information Team**, this is what they do.

Children's Services	Work with children and young people to assess their needs and make sure they are safe; this is usually done by a Social Worker. This includes providing accommodation to children and young people aged 16 or 17 when they are homeless.
Housing Advice & Information Team	Work with people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless to help them find accommodation.

If you are homeless, staff from Children's Services and the Housing Advice & Information Team will work together to find you somewhere to live. Children's Services will make sure you get the support you need to be safe, well and can continue with important things in your life, like education, training and friendships.

To contact Children's Services telephone the Redcar and Cleveland Multi Agency Children's Hub on 01642 130700 or email RedcarMACH@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk

To contact the Housing Advice & Information Team telephone 01642 774774 (if you have no where to stay tonight please explain this to the call operator) or email housingclientservices@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk

After 5pm and at weekends contact the Emergency Duty Team (EDT) on ☎01642 524552



What the Law Says and Your Rights:

Local Authorities have a statutory duty to help young people aged 16 or 17 who are homeless, this means that it is required by law. This page explains the different laws (legal Acts) that set out this statutory duty.

The Children Act 1989 (Section 17) places a duty on Children's Services to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their local area who are in need, by providing services and support (a child is anyone aged under 18).

The Children Act 1989 (Section 20) states that every Local Authority shall provide accommodation for any child in need within their local area who requires accommodation as a result of:

- there being no person who has parental responsibility for them;
- being lost or having been abandoned; or,
- the person who has been caring for them being prevented from providing suitable accommodation or care.

In most circumstances a 16 or 17 year old who is homeless is assessed as being a child in need.

The Housing Act 1996 places a duty on Local Authorities to provide accommodation to those who are homeless and in a 'priority need' group. Since 2002 this has included 16 and 17 year olds, whose support networks (i.e. family relationships) have broken down irrevocably, where they do not qualify for help from Children's Services.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 changes the definition of 'priority need' to include those at risk of becoming homeless within 56 days, extending this from 28 days. It also places a 'Duty to Refer' on public agencies such as Children's Services to refer a person to housing services if they are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

It is accepted in law that the Children Act 1989 has priority over the Housing Act 1996, so where a child in need is homeless, Children's Services have a duty to accommodate the child. This takes precedence over the legal duties of Housing Services. This means that it is Children's Services that must offer help first. If however, a homeless 16 or 17 year old refuses support from Children's Services, the Housing Services have a legal duty to provide accommodation.



What happens when I ask for help?

You can approach either Children's Services or the Housing Advice & Information Team to ask for support, contact details are on page 13 of this guide.

If you contact Children's Services	You will speak to a member of staff from Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council's Multi Agency Children's Hub (the MACH).
If you contact the Housing Advice & Information Team	They will make a referral to the MACH, this is because if you are homeless, Children's Service's duty to provide you with accommodation overrides the duty of the Housing Advice & Information Team to provide accommodation.

A meeting will be arranged....

Very soon after you have spoken to a member of staff at the MACH, a meeting will be arranged for you to speak to a Social Worker along with a Homelessness Prevention Officer, this is likely to take place at the council offices in Redcar.

What happens at the meeting?

The purpose of this meeting is to determine if you are homeless, or if you will be at risk of homelessness within the next 56 days.

This will include discussing your circumstances, any support you will need to prevent you becoming homeless and assisting you in returning home if possible.

A Social Worker will complete an assessment...

Following the joint meeting a Social Worker will need to complete a Child and Family Assessment, this is important because it will determine if you are a 'child in need,' if this is the case Children's

Services will have a duty to provide accommodation. The assessment can take up to 45 days but if you have nowhere safe to stay, Children's Services must provide you with somewhere to stay while they complete the assessment.

What does the social work assessment involve?

A Social Worker will meet with you to discuss your current situation, they will also speak with family members and other important people in your life. This will help the Social Worker to understand your needs and decide what support and help you will need. Most importantly they will ask you how you feel, what you are worried about and what you want to happen.

If you are homeless or at risk of homelessness, due to a relationship breakdown between you and your family, your Social Worker will work with everyone involved to see if this can be sorted out so you can return home if this is appropriate. This is sometimes called 'mediation'.



What if I have nowhere to stay tonight?

If you have nowhere safe to stay, then it is the responsibility of Children's Services to find you somewhere to stay that night and to pay for it.

The Housing Advice & Information Team will work with the Social Worker to find somewhere suitable for you, you will stay there while the Social Worker completes an assessment. Children's Services might also pay for things like food, toiletries and clothing if required, depending on the type of accommodation provided.

If you do have somewhere to stay at the moment, the Social Worker and Homeless Prevention Officer will discuss with you, and everyone else that lives with you, if it is possible for you to stay there and leave in a planned way. This is preferable as it will give the Social Worker time to complete an assessment and allow more time to find accommodation that meets your needs.



What are my choices?

If, following your assessment, your Social Worker finds you to be a Child in Need, you have several choices about how to get help and support.

It's important that you understand the difference, as this will affect the help and support you are entitled to after you turn 18. You can choose the option that you think is best for you.

- You can be supported by Children's Services as a **'Child in Need'**
- You can choose to become a **'Child in Our Care'**
- **You can decline help and support from Children's Services and ask the Housing Advice & Information Team to provide you with accommodation.**

The following pages explain each option and the help and support you will be entitled to.

Advocacy: Help to make a choice

We know there is a lot to think about and you will need help to make the right choice for you. You can ask your Social Worker for advice at any time, another option is to ask for an advocate. An advocate is an impartial person who will talk you through all the information and explain your rights. They can help you to understand the different options and what this means for your future.



An advocate represents your views and wishes to people who make decisions about you and helps you understand what's happening. They can attend meetings with you and explain what every stage means, to help you be included in making decisions. Advocates don't work for Redcar & Cleveland Council, they are employed by the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS). If you would like an advocate you can ask your Social Worker to refer you or contact them yourself.

To speak to NYAS telephone 0808 808 1001 or visit www.nyas.net



What help will I get as a Child in Need?

As a Child in Need, you will be supported by a Social Worker, working in partnership with your family. The Social Worker will consider who else needs to be involved in providing support to you. This could include important people in your life, like relatives, or other adults that you know and trust, as well as professionals like youth workers, housing workers or people from your school or college. These people are referred to as your support network.

Your support network will work together with you to create a plan to make sure you get the help and support that you need to live independently until you are 18, or to help you return to live with your family (this will depend on your circumstances).

Your plan will detail what support you will receive and who will be providing that support. Your plan will be agreed and discussed at regular meetings involving you and your support network.

You will get help with:

- Finding somewhere to live
- Accessing education, employment and training
- Learning the skills you need to live independently, like understanding a tenancy, practical skills to maintain your home and help with budgeting your money
- Support to keep up relationships with family members
- Your health and wellbeing
- Other advice and support as needed

How long will I receive support?

As a child in need support is available for as long as it is needed, or until you reach your 18th birthday. All support will stop when you turn 18.

Who pays for my accommodation if I'm a Child in Need?

If you are going to be living independently, you will be supported to make a claim for any benefits you may be entitled to. People over the age of 16 who are living independently can apply for Universal Credit. This includes money for day to day costs like food, bills and the cost of housing.

It's important to understand that if you have a job, even if it is just part time, this will affect how much benefit you receive and you will need to use your wages to pay for your housing and living costs.

It can take time for benefits to be arranged, while you are waiting, Children's Services will pay for your housing costs and provide money for day to day expenses like food and other costs. If your benefit is backdated you might need to pay some of this money back. You will get help and advice from your Social Worker and other professionals to budget and pay bills, but you will be responsible for making sure your rent is paid and if you miss a payment this could make it hard for you to rent a property in the future.



What help will I get as a Child in Our Care?

As a Child in Our Care, Redcar & Cleveland Council will be responsible for looking after you and making sure you are safe and well - we will do this in partnership with your family (where this is appropriate).

As a Child in Our Care, you will be supported by a Social Worker, they will consider who else needs to be involved in supporting you, like people from other agencies. Your Social Worker will also speak to you about important people in your life and how they can help.

You and your Social Worker will complete a Care Plan. This will detail what you need and how different agencies can help you. Your Social Worker will coordinate the agencies that are supporting you.

Your Social Worker will find you a 'placement' this is somewhere to stay with support, it could be a flat with a support worker(s) that visits, or with support workers who are based in the building and where other young people live as well, or you might

stay with a foster family, it depends on what is best to meet your needs. Your Social Worker will discuss this with you.

As part of the Care Plan, there will be a more detailed **Placement Plan**, which will set out what the placement will provide for you and what is expected of you.

You will get help with:

- Finding somewhere to live
- Education, employment and training
- Learning the skills you need to live independently, like understanding your tenancy, practical skills to maintain your home and help with budgeting your money.
- Support in keeping up relationships with family members
- Your health and wellbeing
- Other advice and support as needed

Who pays for my accommodation if I'm a Child in Our Care?

Children's Services will pay for your accommodation and they have responsibility for making sure this is paid. As a Child in Our Care you don't need to claim benefits. If you are living independently you will get an allowance to pay for food and other day to day costs. You may have to collect this weekly or daily from the Children's Social Care office in Redcar until arrangements can be made to pay this into your bank or until a payment card is set up.



What help will I get as a Child in Our Care?

There will be regular meetings and reviews, (known as statutory reviews) involving yourself and the services that are supporting you. The reviews will be chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer who will check you are getting the help and support that you need.

You will be offered regular health checks. This includes a general chat about how you are feeling and any health issues or worries you may have. You will get help to register with a Doctor and Dentist if you don't have one.

If I become a Child in Our Care does this mean that I will go into foster care or a children's home?

Not necessarily, this will depend on your individual needs and circumstances. Most 16 or 17 year olds who are homeless and become a Child In Care will live semi-independently, usually in a shared flat with some support provided by a worker that pops in a few times a week to check they are okay. Some young people just aren't ready for this much independence, so foster care might be more appropriate. In assessing your needs the Social Worker will ask you what you want and take this into consideration. It's very unlikely that you would live in a children's home, this is only considered for young people who are vulnerable and have very complex needs.

How long will I be supported as a Child in Our Care?

You will receive help and support from a Social Worker including paying for somewhere to live until you are 18. If you have been a Child in Our Care for 13 weeks or more before turning 18, you are entitled to help and support as a Care Leaver.

What help will I get as a Care Leaver?

As a Care Leaver you can get help and support from a Personal Advisor until you are 25. The Personal Advisor will visit every 8 weeks and work with you to develop a Pathway Plan to help you live independently and access services. The Pathway Plan will help you work towards your goals and deal with any worries.

A Personal Advisor can help with things like finding somewhere to live, help with budgeting and providing emotional and practical support. If you were a Child in Our Care with Redcar & Cleveland Council you will still get help from one of our Personal Advisors even if you live outside of the borough.

When you are 18 you will be financially independent and you will need to claim benefits when you leave care if you are not earning a wage. If you are a Care Leaver your Personal Advisor can help you with this.

Living independently at age 18 and taking on the responsibility of your own home and finances can be daunting. If you don't have family members or trusted adult friends that can help you with this, a Personal Advisor can be helpful.



What if I don't want help from Children's Services?

You don't have to accept help from Children's Services. If you decline help from Children's Services the Council's Housing Advice & Information Team still have a duty to help you.

How will the Housing Advice & Information Team Help?

They will find you somewhere to live, this is likely to be accommodation with some support, either in your own flat or shared with others. You will not get a choice of accommodation and must accept the first offer they make to you.

How long will I get support from the Housing Advice & Information Team?

If you are not homeless, but are threatened with homelessness within 56 days, a Prevention Duty will be owed.

If you are homeless, or the Housing Team have been unable to prevent you from becoming homeless, a Relief Duty will be owed for up to 56 days.

During both the Prevention and Relief Duty period a Personalised Housing Plan (PHP) will be discussed with you, setting out the reasonable steps that you and the Housing Advice & Information Team, will take to try and prevent or relieve your homelessness. Other relevant people in your life, for example parents or Social Workers, may also be asked to take actions to support you.

When you have found somewhere to live and are no longer at risk of becoming homeless, support from the Housing Advice & Information Team will end.

Who pays for my accommodation if the Housing Advice & Information Team are helping me?

If you are going to be living independently, you will be supported to make a claim for any benefits you may be entitled to. People over the age of 16 who are living independently can make a claim for Universal Credit. This includes money for day to day costs like food, bills and the cost of housing.

It's important to understand that, if you have a job, even if it is just part time, this will effect how much benefit you receive and you will need to use your wages to pay for your housing and living costs.

You will be responsible for making sure your rent is paid and if you miss a payment this could make it hard for you to rent a property in the future.



What accommodation is available?

Renting a home when you are 16 or 17

To rent a home you need a tenancy agreement this is a contract between the tenant (you) and the landlord. The law says that someone under 18 can't hold a tenancy agreement so this reduces the housing options available for 16 and 17 year olds.

Most housing associations, social landlords that operate on a not for profit basis (like Beyond Housing and thirteen), do not let properties to under 18's. The same applies to private landlords.

If a landlord is willing to rent a home to someone aged 16 or 17 it requires a responsible adult to hold the tenancy on your behalf until you reach 18 years old. This is called an Equitable Tenancy, if you need an Equitable Tenancy the housing provider will need to do some checks to approve the suitability of the responsible adult.

Supported Housing

Supported housing is any accommodation where support, usually to help the tenant live independently, is provided as part of the tenancy.

There are different types of supported housing, it could be a scheme of flats or rooms with shared communal areas and a support worker who is based in the building or individual self contained flats with a

support worker that visits for a few hours a week.

Support might include help to manage your bills, budget and help to access other services. Examples of supported housing schemes in Redcar & Cleveland include Coatham House and East Cleveland Youth Housing Trust. Supported housing can be a good option for young people but you should be aware that there isn't much supported housing in Redcar & Cleveland and many schemes do not accept under 18s.

For more information see the Housing Advice for Young People Leaflet



[Advice and information | Redcar and Cleveland
\(redcar-cleveland.gov.uk\)](http://redcar-cleveland.gov.uk)



Frequently Asked Questions

How long will a Children and Family Assessment take?

The assessment can take up to 45 days but if you have nowhere safe to stay, Children's Services must provide you with somewhere to stay while they complete the assessment.

What happens if I want to stay living with my friend or relatives?

This depends on your legal status, if you are living in an informal family arrangement you will be supported as a Child in Need with services as required. If, however you have decided to be a Child in Our Care your Social Worker will assess and consider if there are any family or friends who can provide care to you, if this is the case the Social Worker will consider their suitability by undertaking a fostering assessment. If approved as a foster, this would give you a legal right to stay with them until you are 18 if necessary.

Can I apply for a Housing Association Property?

To apply for a Housing Association Property you will need to make an application to go on the Housing Register. You need to be 18 to register, so you won't be able to live in a Housing Association property if you are 16 or 17. However, if you will be turning 18 soon, the Housing Advice & Information Team or your Social Worker can help you apply. Please note though, there is a long waiting list for one bedroom homes in Redcar & Cleveland.



For Help and Advice please contact...

Redcar & Cleveland Children and Families Service

01642 130700

RedcarMACH@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk

Seafield House, Kirkleatham Steet, Redcar, TS10 1SP

To contact the Housing Advice & Information Service

01642 774774 (for out of Hours Emergencies call 01642 771300)

housingclientservices@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk

Other Services that can help:

Citizens Advice Bureau Redcar

03444 111 444 (advice line)

01642 030000 - leave name and telephone number and someone will call back.

office@rccitizensadvice.co.uk

17 Queen Street, Redcar, TS10 1AB

Shelter

0808 800 4444

england.shelter.org.uk (webchat and online housing advice available)

Domestic Abuse Support Services

Harbour Support Services

0300 303 3781

THRIVE.WithYou@NHS.net or visit www.myharbour.org.uk/

EVA Women's Aid

01642 490677

info@eva.org.uk or visit www.eva.org.uk

Foundation

0300 4562214

foundationredcardvteam@foundationuk.org or visit www.foundationuk.org

Halo Project (specialist Black and Minority Ethnic provider)

01642 683045

info@haloproject.org.uk or visit www.haloproject.org.uk



Any questions?

You probably have lots of questions. You can write them down here, ready to ask your Social Worker or the homelessness prevention officer when you speak to them next.

