



Northumberland
County Council

Joint Housing Protocol For Homeless 16/17 Year Olds

Reviewed April 2023

Joint Housing Protocol for Homeless 16- and 17-Year Olds

Purpose of the Guide

This guide is intended to be a practical manual about the joint housing protocol for homeless 16 and 17 year olds in the county. The guide is to be used by front line workers and service managers in organisations who are signed up to the protocol. It outlines the agreed joint working arrangements between agencies.

What is the Joint Housing Protocol?

This joint protocol is an agreement that establishes the roles and responsibilities of different agencies towards homeless 16 and 17 year olds. It outlines the respective statutory responsibilities of the Northumberland County Council Children's Services and Housing Services (the Housing Authority).

In addition, it details the practical joint working arrangements between the housing authority, children's services and other agencies that can assist with the housing and support of homeless 16 and 17 year olds in the county.

Why have the Joint Housing Protocol?

No single department of Northumberland County Council has full responsibility towards homeless 16- and 17-year-olds. Both Children's Services and Housing have statutory duties towards this vulnerable client group. See section on the legislative context for more details.

Alongside this, other statutory and voluntary agencies also provide a range of services to these young people. Without clear agreement on the respective roles and responsibilities, young people are often passed between agencies and do not receive the appropriate or most timely services.

What are the Benefits of Having a Joint Housing Protocol?

This joint protocol covers homeless 16 and 17 year olds and includes those identified as Children in Need. Young people can be classed as homeless if:

- Parents or Guardians are no longer willing/prepared to accommodate – see guidance around the Provision of accommodation for 16- and 17-year-olds who may be homeless and/or require accommodation:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/provision-of-accommodation-for-16-and-17-year-olds-who-may-be-homeless-and-or-require-accommodation>
- They have nowhere to live
- They are based in temporary accommodation such as a hostel, bed and breakfast
- They cannot stay in their home because of violence or the threat of violence
- They are staying temporarily with friends or relatives who are unable or unwilling to accommodate them in the future

- They have somewhere to live but it is not reasonable to expect them to stay there.
- Young people can also be classed as homeless if they are likely to become homeless within 56 days, in line with the guidance within the [Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](#).

The Joint Housing Protocol Partners

Below is a list of the key agencies involved with the joint housing protocol process:

- Children's Services
- Northumberland County Council Housing Service
- Youth Justice Service
- Early Help Services
- Sorted Substance Misuse Service
- Northumberland Homefinder – Social Housing Providers
- Supported Accommodation Providers within Northumberland County

What Happens to 16 Year Olds who are Still at School or Young People Under 16?

School-age 16-year-olds (i.e. those in year 11 up until the school leaving date of the last Friday in June) are not to be taken through the Joint Housing Protocol process but are instead referred by partners directly in the first instance to First Contact, who will determine which service is best placed to meet the needs of the young person.

This may involve a referral to an early help service for coordination of support or the completion of a statutory social work assessment whilst putting in place appropriate support.

If the situation cannot be resolved by an early help service, a request for a case to be escalated can be made and would require a referral to be made to First Contact for allocation for a C&F Assessment; who will then look to allocate the case to the appropriate service.

In the event of out of hours contact, referrals should be made with the Emergency Duty Team. Contact details for all services can be found on the back page of this guide.

Referrals from Social Housing Providers

Where a young person has applied directly to a Social Housing Provider through Northumberland Homefinder for accommodation between the ages of 16-17 years, all applications should be deferred pending the calling of a Joint Housing Protocol Meeting.

It should be noted that Northumberland Homes is the only social housing provider on Homefinder that allows under 18's to access social housing.

It is essential to ensure that young people requesting accommodation have the appropriate support in place before accessing independent accommodation and that the need for accommodation is a planned move in which there is support from the wider family.

In these instances, Northumberland Homes will need to make contact with First Contact to request an assessment of the young person's needs.

First Contact Triage will screen the referral and forward this referral to either an early help service or Northumberland Adolescent Services (NAS) for an assessment and the calling of a panel meeting where appropriate.

In most instances the referral will be forwarded to an early help service unless there are significant safeguarding concerns or issues of immediate homelessness which warrant the involvement of the 14+ Team within Northumberland Adolescent Service (NAS - level 4 service).

These services could include the early help teams, schools or colleges as well as voluntary agencies.

If at the meeting it is agreed that the young person is ready for independence, support will be put in place for the young person to access accommodation via the provider. It is essential that staff from Northumberland Homes/Housing Services attend this meeting to explain more about managing an independent tenancy.

For those young people under the age of 18, who wish to access a tenancy via Northumberland Homes, an agreement will need to be reached to determine who will act as guarantor for the young person, before an equitable tenancy can be issued.

Where a young person (aged 16-17) is in a social housing tenancy and is issued a notice to seek possession, the social housing provider needs to make a referral to First Contact to make services aware of the impending eviction. At this point the referral will be referred to NAS to undertake an assessment and determine the accommodation and support needs of the young person.

Referrals from Supported Accommodation Providers

As with referrals from social housing providers, supported accommodation providers will contact First Contact in the first instance when a young person aged 16/17 years applies directly to them for accommodation. All applications should be deferred pending the calling of a Joint Housing Protocol Meeting.

First Contact will forward this referral to either an appropriate early help service or NAS for the completion of an early help assessment and organisation of a Team Around the Family meeting. In most instances the referral will be forwarded to an early help service unless there are significant safeguarding concerns or issues of immediate homelessness, which warrant the involvement of NAS.

If at the meeting it is agreed that supported accommodation is appropriate for the young person, support will be put in place for the young person to access accommodation via the provider.

Where a young person (aged 16-17 years) is in a supported accommodation and is issued a notice of eviction, the supported accommodation provider needs to make a referral to First Contact to make services aware of the impending eviction. At this point the referral will be referred to NAS to undertake an assessment and determine the accommodation and support needs of the young person, if the young person is not already open to the 14+ Team within NAS.

The Legislative Context

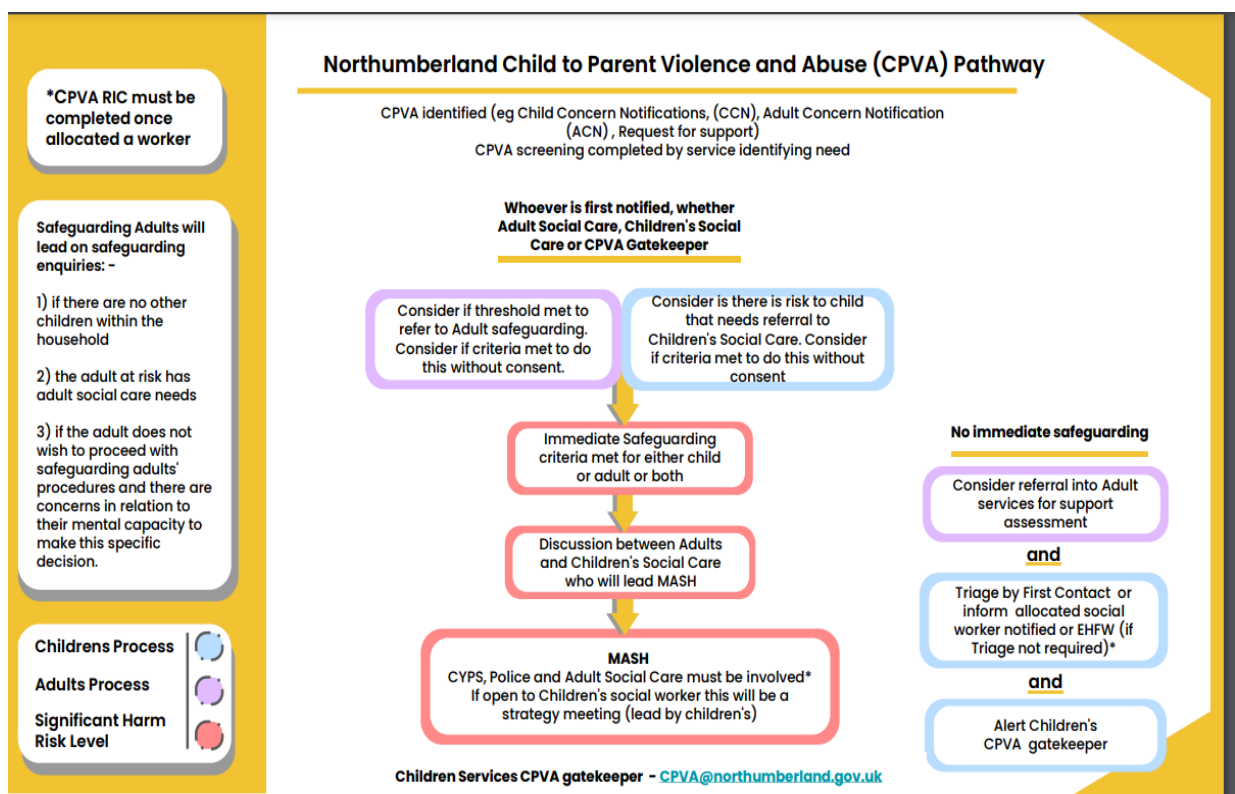
Young people in housing need, require Early Help Services, Youth Justice Service, Children’s Services, Housing Services and other local agencies to work together if they are to get appropriate support.

This need for cooperation is recognised in legislation and accompanying guidance (these are outlined in the appendices) which highlights an expectation from Government that Children Services and local Housing Authorities forge proactive links with each other to ensure they can comply fully with the inter-relating pieces of legislation and prevent failures in responsibilities and standards of care.

Child to Parent Violence and Aggression (CPVA)

Where a young person is at risk of homelessness due to conflict within the home, particularly due to a conflict/violence in relationships between the parents of the young person; consideration should be given to a referral being made to the Youth Justice Service for support around these issues, where thresholds are met.

Below is an overview of the CPVA pathway and how referrals can be made to the service:



A Brief Overview of the Process

The protocol process involves several stages. All homeless 16- and 17-year-olds will be given an assessment to identify their housing and support needs by NAS.

Where more than one agency is required to work together to meet the needs of a young person, a panel meeting (TAF/Care Team) will be called and a support package put in place.

Under the protocol not every homeless 16/17 year old will be directed for a homelessness assessment. This will only occur when:

- a young person does not want to be accommodated under [Sec 20 of the Children Act 1989](#) and does not want to work with NAS on a CIN basis.
- Where a young person is supported as a CIN and all needs are met but longer term accommodation is needed once they turn 18

The outcomes for young people will be reviewed after an agreed length of time to determine progress made towards their assessed needs and requirement for on-going support.

How are Referrals Made?

All homeless 16- and 17-year-olds (except for those still in Year 11) will be referred to the NAS for an assessment of their needs and access to emergency accommodation (where necessary).

In practice, this means that should a young person present as homeless to an Early Help service, Supported Accommodation Providers, Housing, Sorted or the Youth Justice Service – these agencies should undertake initial enquiries with the young person's family to determine that the young person is actually homeless and that they are unable to return home with the provision of support from other services.

Where services are satisfied that the young person has no option to return home at that moment in time, then a referral should be made to the First Contact for support from NAS 14+ Team, if the young person is not currently open to the Children's Services. As a matter of good practice, discussions should take place with the Team Manager from the 14+ Team and the Team Manager within the Accommodation Service to determine where support best sits prior to a referral being made to First Contact.

For those young people who are not immediately homeless or those wanting to access a planned move out of the family home with support from family; they are able to present to any of the above agencies for support around accessing accommodation.

However, for those that have applied directly to supported accommodation or to Northumberland Homefinder – there is an expectation that these providers will make a referral to First Contact for the referral to be screened and either forwarded to an early help service or to NAS to instigate a Joint Protocol meeting.

Stage 1 - Early Help Assessment

The aim of the Early Help Assessment is to identify and meet the immediate needs of the young person whilst ensuring he/she is engaged in the assessment process, which will enable his/her needs to be assessed and appropriate mechanisms put in place for support and accommodation.

The Early Help Assessment incorporates information on the young person's situation and past experiences. It will highlight any additional needs the young person may have other than accommodation needs. The past history, support needs and accommodation needs of a young person all act as an indicator of the support services which may need to be involved. This will be carried out by the agency to which the young person presents.

The assessment can either be completed on an Multi Agency Referral Form (MARF) or for cases held by the Youth Justice Service, they will utilise the Out of Court Disposal Assessment document, to capture the needs of the young person.

This initial agency will retain lead responsibility for the young person during this first stage; unless there is an issue of immediate homelessness; resulting in the need for accommodation. In these cases, a referral will be made to First Contact for assessment and accommodation to be provided by NAS.

The table below details the key elements of the Early Help Assessment and the agreed role of each partner agency in delivering its response

| ☐ Indicates agreed responsibility by agencies | Northumberland Adolescent Service (NAS) | Housing Service | Youth Justice Service | Sorted Substance Misuse Service | Early Help Service |
|---|---|-----------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Take referral and complete Multi Agency Referral Form/ Out of Court Disposal Assessment | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2. Make immediate contact with young person's family to explore options for young person to return home and instigate a home visit (ideally the same day, if not possible within 24hrs) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 3. Where a young person is able to return home and issues are resolved by universal services, then no further action will be required under the Joint Protocol | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 4. Where a young person is able to return home but on- | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| going issues remain in the home and there is a potential for the young person to become homeless – then a Joint Protocol Panel Meeting should be called by the service working with the young person and the accommodation service, Housing & any other service working with the young person will be invited to determine on-going support | | | | | |
| 5. If young person is unable to return home – then referral needs to be made to the First Contact to request accommodation and assessment by the NAS; following discussions with 14+ Team Manager. NAS duty officers to be made aware of the referral and need for accommodation | | Liaise with NAS Accom Service | Liaise with NAS Accom Service | Liaise with NAS Accom Service | Liaise with NAS Accom Service |
| 6. NAS will undertake a follow up home visit to determine if young person can be returned home with support (joint visit may be undertaken with partner agencies or Northumberland Families First Team) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 7. Where it has been confirmed by NAS that the young person is unable to return home, emergency accommodation will | ☐ | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| <p>be arranged for the young person</p> | | | | | |
| <p>8. Where a young person is unable to return home and the need for accommodation extends beyond 24hrs – the young person needs to be consulted on their wishes about being accommodated under Sec 20 of the Children’s Act</p> <p>Independent advice should be provided to the young person about what it means to be “looked after” under Sec 20</p> <p>Where a Young person is agreeable to being accommodated under Sec 20 – NAS will provide weekly income maintenance payments to the young person and accept responsibility for the young person’s accommodation costs whilst the assessment is on-going and work is undertaken to rehabilitate the young person home</p> | <p>Referral to the Advocate within the Youth Service to be discussed with young person</p> <p>□</p> | <p>Liaise with NAS</p> | <p>Liaise with NAS</p> | <p>Liaise with NAS</p> | <p>Liaise with NAS</p> |
| <p>9. Where a young person has declined to be accommodated under Sec 20, further discussion should take place with the young person about being supported as a “child in need” under Sec 17.</p> | <p>□</p> | <p>□</p> | <p>□</p> | <p>□</p> | <p>□</p> |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| <p>If a young person is agreeable to Sec 17 support, they should be assisted to make a claim for DWP benefits and a claim for Housing Benefit made to cover the costs of their supported accommodation rent. The accommodation service will meet the costs associated with the support element of any placement identified</p> | | | | | |
| <p>9. Where a young person refuses support from NAS – a Joint Protocol meeting should be called to determine which agency is best suited to support the young person</p> | □ | □ | □ | □ | □ |

***Youth Justice Service works with existing clients only**

In order for the protocol to work effectively **it is imperative** that responsibility should not be passed between agencies unless specified above.

Take a Referral and Assess the Needs of the Young Person and their Family

When a 16 or 17 year old presents to you as homeless, you should contact First Contact to identify whether an early help assessment or C&F Assessment have previously been completed and gain information from them about current and/or past involvement this will assist in the next stage of completion of the Multi Agency Referral Form/ Out of Court Disposal assessment for those open to YJS.

This helps establish the young person’s housing situation and will also highlight any other issues that may affect the young person e.g. offending history/ support needs. It will indicate which agencies need to be involved with the young person.

Make Contact with the Family

Immediate contact needs to be made with the young person’s family to confirm that the young person is homeless and that there is not an option for the young person to return home. A home visit should ideally take place on the same day or within 24 hours if this is not feasible.

This allows for open dialogue with the parents/carers and the young person as to the issues that have led to the homelessness issue. This needs to happen to explore the options for a return home, even if it is just a temporary return with a planned exit to follow. Research shows that 16/17-year-olds are better off at home unless at risk of harm.

It may be possible to avoid the young person becoming homeless following discussions with the family and the provision of support to the family through the use of universal and targeted services. Where a young person is able to remain at home, then there will be no need for a Joint Protocol Meeting to be called.

Arranging Emergency Accommodation

This involves exploring options for temporary accommodation for the same night. In the first instance agencies need to explore options for a temporary return home or stay with other family members, if appropriate.

Only if arrangements between family members cannot be made should emergency accommodation be arranged.

To arrange emergency accommodation:

- Ensure the young person is happy to be placed in emergency accommodation
- Make referral to First Contact to advise that the young person is homeless and request input from NAS Accommodation Service to source suitable emergency accommodation. (An accommodation referral and a risk assessment will be needed to progress any accommodation request) It should be noted that NAS will not be able to guarantee that the emergency accommodation will be within the home area of the young person and may require the young person to be placed within another part of the county.
- Once a placement is identified for the young person, it is an expectation that the referring agency provides support to the young person in accessing the emergency accommodation identified.
- As a result of accessing emergency accommodation, the young person will be offered on-going support and an assessment of their needs by NAS.
- Where emergency accommodation goes beyond 24 hours, discussions will take place with the 14+ Team Manager and the young person about being accommodated under [Sec 20 of the Children Act 1989](#); whilst NAS undertake a full assessment of their needs.

Responding Out of Hours

If a homeless 16- or 17-year-old presents out of hours they should be directed to the Emergency Duty Team for support in accessing appropriate emergency accommodation.

The Emergency Duty Team can be contacted on 01670 534 600 outside office hours. This will include youth work sessions during the evening and at weekends.

What Happens Once a Young Person is placed in Emergency Accommodation?

When a young person is placed within emergency accommodation; NAS will begin an assessment of their needs and work with the young person and their family to try and facilitate a return home wherever possible.

However, it is recognised that in order for a young person to return home, additional support and changes in behaviours of the young person and/or family may be required. In these instances, emergency accommodation may go beyond 24 hours whilst a support plan enabling the young person to return home is formulated and services bought online to support the young person and their family.

Where emergency accommodation goes beyond 24 hours, discussions will take place with the young person about being accommodated under [Sec 20 of the Children Act 1989](#).

For those young people who are agreeable to being accommodated under Sec 20, NAS will provide weekly income maintenance, equivalent to the weekly DWP benefit amount for a young person aged 16-17 and accept responsibility for the accommodation costs of the young person; when they are accommodated under Sec 20.

Section 20 Accommodation

The provision of Section 20 accommodation would need to take account of the young person's views. Information will be given to the young person, in writing and verbally, by Social Workers from NAS and any advocate that has been allocated, which explains the choices and options the young person has in relation to being accommodated under Section 20.

If a young person is accommodated under Sec 20, Children Looked After procedures would apply as well as the Joint Protocol and as with Section 17, NAS would take the lead with other partners assisting as appropriate.

Accommodation under section 20, may be provided by placing the young person in foster care, residential care or under the provision of S.23(2) (f) i.e. making such other arrangements as seen appropriate to them.

This may be a placement in emergency temporary accommodation, preferably in accommodation which is supported.

NAS is able to work with others in order to discharge their duty re accommodation under Sec 20, i.e. Housing and Supported Accommodation Providers. For most 16- and 17-year-olds in these cases, Supported Accommodation is likely to be an appropriate option. This will ensure continuity in accommodation at 18 and a priority banding in the County's Allocations policy for Social Housing.

What Happens when a Young Person declines to be Accommodated under Section 20?

If the young person does not want to be accommodated under S20, they must be judged competent by the NAS to make such a decision and have had the benefit of advice about the consequences of making such a decision. This advice will be delivered by the NAS in the first instance.

The young person will also be advised to seek their own legal advice and helped to access this. Young people will also be able to request the support of an advocate via their allocated worker, who will complete a referral for the allocation of an advocate via the council externally commissioning advocacy provider who will be able to provide independent advice and support.

If the young person refuses section 20 accommodation and is either judged not to be competent to make that decision and/or at serious risk of harm, NAS will seek legal advice on the next steps.

If a young person refuses Sec 20 accommodation and is deemed to be competent to make that decision but is still in need of accommodation, the duty to support with accommodation will remain with NAS under Sec 17 Child in Need arrangements, whilst an assessment of their needs is on-going.

What Happens when a Young Person Declines Section 17 Support and Assessment from NAS?

Where a young person refuses support from NAS and does not wish to engage in an assessment of their needs by the service, then a Joint Protocol Meeting should be called to determine which agency is best suited to meet their needs.

In these instances, it may be decided that the Housing Services may best suited to continue to meet the needs of the young person. Where this is the case, Housing Services will take responsibility for the young person and will undertake an assessment of their needs under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

At this point, the case will be closed to NAS.

Getting an Income for the Young Person

Where emergency accommodation goes beyond 24hrs, discussions will take place with the young person about being accommodated under Sec 20 of the Children Act 1989. For those young people who are agreeable to being accommodated under Sec 20, NAS will provide weekly income maintenance, equivalent to the weekly DWP benefit amount for a young person aged 16-17.

NAS will also accept responsibility for the accommodation costs of the young person; when they are accommodated under Sec 20

Where a young person declines the offer to be "looked after", then NAS will continue to offer support to the young person under Sec 17 arrangements. In these instances, the young person should be supported to make a claim for DWP Benefits and Housing Benefit to cover the crisis situation.

The named agencies (YJS, range of Early Help services, Sorted, Housing Services and NAS) will offer support and expertise through this period. They will also help the young person to make longer-term benefit claims.

Depending on circumstances, Universal Credit may be claimed by the young person. For payment to be made it may be necessary for services to provide supporting information to Job Centre Plus to confirm estrangement from the

family. Further information or assistance is available from the Welfare Rights Service.

All young people will be actively encouraged and supported to claim housing benefit to cover the costs of any emergency accommodation; when they decline to be accommodated under Sec 20.

Calling a Panel Meeting

Where a young person has presented to a service, such as the Youth Service, Supported Accommodation Providers, Housing Services, Sorted or YJS requesting accommodation but is not immediately homeless and is looking for a planned move out of the family home. Then it is essential that the relevant service complete a Multi Agency Referral Form/ Out of Court Disposal assessment for YJS staff, to determine the needs of the young person.

Once the service is satisfied that it is in the interests of the young person to access longer term accommodation, a Joint Housing Protocol Panel meeting should be called to discuss the accommodation and support needs of the young person. **A representative from NAS Accommodation Service and Housing Service must be invited to every Panel Meeting organised.** The young person and their carers/parents should also be invited to the meeting.

If the young person and their family are already open to a family worker within the Early Help Service within a Locality Team, then they will be asked to attend the panel meeting.

The practitioner who is working with the young person should contact First Contact to identify whether an Early Help Assessment or C&F Assessment and Team Around the Family (TAF) process is currently in place or has previously been in place.

If this is the case, the practitioner should endeavour to make contact with the Lead Professional (LP) and gain information from them about current and/or past involvement that will assist in the completion of the Early Help Assessment. If the Lead Professional (LP) is still involved with the young person they should be invited to the Initial Joint Protocol Panel Meeting (Initial TAF) and should represent the work of the Team around the Family (TAF).

The Purpose of the Panel Meeting

The purpose of the meeting is to make a collective decision on the young person's case and agree the most appropriate way forward for the individual based on their situation and needs

When Should the Panel Meetings be held?

In the event that the young person has short term suitable accommodation but is still at risk or going to become homeless a panel meeting should be convened within 5 working days or less depending upon the circumstances.

Who Should be Present?

The Multi Agency Referral Form should identify which key agencies need to be involved with the case and attend the panel meeting.

This should include the young person, relevant agencies, TAF Lead Professional (LP) (where appropriate), and anyone else the young person requests to attend.

The NAS Accommodation Service, NAS Duty Officer, Housing Services and any other agency supporting the young person must be present at each panel meeting. This is so that the Panel Meeting can decide if a Section 17 C&F Assessment needs to be carried out.

In the rare cases that the NAS cannot attend the panel meeting should proceed as normal and at this meeting a recommendation should be made as to whether the young person requires a C&F Assessment under section 17.

IF NAS is not present and the panel meeting feels that a young person would benefit from a C&F Assessment under section 17, the lead individual for the panel meeting must contact the relevant team manager from NAS to discuss the recommendation of the panel that a C&F Assessment be undertaken.

If the team manager is in agreement, they will then allocate the case to a worker within NAS to undertake a C&F Assessment. If the team manager is not in agreement with the recommendation of the panel meeting they will advise the young person and the panel members and give their reasons in writing.

An invitation should be made to the parents/carers.

What Should Happen in Advance of the Panel Meeting?

The young person should be prepared about what to expect at the panel meeting and options that may arise out of the meeting, including the possible involvement of NAS

Copies of the Multi Agency Referral form should be circulated to all panel members in advance of the panel meeting.

What will Happen at the Panel Meeting?

The panel meetings should be structured so a consistent format is followed to allow those involved to establish the key facts on the individual's circumstances and ensure the most appropriate response to their needs is made. A panel meeting checklist has been devised to assist with this.

Paperwork for panel meetings has been devised and should always be used to record the discussion and decisions made and the young person's views.

Where an Early Help Team Around the Family (TAF) or C&F Assessment Care Team does exist, then the Initial Meeting will agree who should need to engage with that process to ensure the ongoing support for the young person's accommodation is taken forward within this setting.

If neither of these exist then at the Initial Panel Meeting there should be a discussion and decision as to whether the young person will require ongoing help and assistance from a range of agencies to secure good outcomes and meet identified needs. If the JP Initial Panel Meeting, in consultation with the young

person, agrees this would be beneficial, then the Panel will agree who will carry out the Lead Professional role.

The panel meeting must discuss whether a C&F Assessment is needed and plan when this will be carried out and the process for this. The representative from the NAS will explain what a C&F Assessment is.

This agency should record the discussion/decisions of the panel using the Record of Joint Housing Protocol Meeting form held in ICS, this should be shared with all services once the meeting is completed, and the notes recorded.

What Happens after the Panel Meeting?

The actions/timescales listed should be adhered to and progress monitored by the identified lead agency.

C&F Assessment - Section 17

A C&F Assessment determines if a child is a "Child in Need" within the definition of the Children Act 1989. If a C&F Assessment is deemed necessary, this will be carried out by staff from the NAS within the relevant timescales. This assessment will identify the child's needs and services required to meet those needs. Accommodation under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 may be one of those services.

If a C&F Assessment is not deemed necessary, the Joint Protocol will continue as normal. If further issues arise that may mean that the young person's needs need to be reconsidered, a subsequent panel meeting will be called and NAS will reassess the need for a C&F Assessment.

The panel meeting will record the outcome of the discussions within the Record of Joint Housing Protocol form held within ICS as to whether a C&F Assessment is necessary.

Stage Two

Support

After the panel meeting lead responsibility passes to the Lead Professional identified at the Panel Meeting.

The lead agency will work with the young person and other identified agencies to coordinate services and reach a satisfactory outcome for the young person.

Where a Young Person is Deemed to be a "Child in Need"

Where the young person's needs are to be met through section 17, this means that the young person is identified as a "Child in Need." The Joint Protocol will continue as normal, but the Children Services Children in Need Procedures will also apply.

This means that the NAS would take the lead in these cases and run the joint protocol alongside within the framework of the Children in Need Procedures. The other partners would continue their involvement as appropriate.

The C&F Assessment will determine if accommodation should be provided under section 20.

What Happens if the Young Person is Found not to be Statutorily Homeless?

If a young person is not deemed to be a Child in Need and found not to be statutorily homeless then Housing Services has very limited duties owed to the young person. Equally, unless there were exceptional circumstances, Children Services, NAS teams are unlikely to find the young person to be a child in need and therefore they too have limited duty owed to the young person.

In these circumstances, Early Help Services and YJS (if they are already involved in the case) will work with the young person to explore other housing options available to them.

It is envisaged that the most likely reason a young person is to be found not homeless will be that the parents/guardians will offer for the young person to return home. Clearly, child protection issues must be paramount in these cases and no young person will be expected to return to a potentially abusive situation.

If family relationships are not abusive but present a barrier to a return home. Support can be offered to the young person and their family through the use of universal and targeted services to resolve the issues and help support a return home to family.

Stage Three

Case Review

Housing Services, the Youth Service Specialist Youth Support worker, YJS or NAS will review each case every six to eight weeks to ensure all outcomes of the family plan are being actioned in line with the needs of the young person. The responsibility for calling the review meeting will lie with the lead professional for that case.

Monitoring the Protocol

The success of the protocol is measured on the numbers of young people prevented from becoming homeless and the successful sustainment of tenancies of young people who have been through the protocol.

Interagency Concerns

Where disagreements occur about referrals, service provision or the conduct and behaviour of staff from either service, the individual staff member should discuss these in the first instance with their own line manager. The manager will then determine an appropriate course of action in the context of the disagreement, from a range of options.

Providing effective supervision and support to the staff member to re-establish good working relationships or negotiate a compromise acceptable to both services.

Organising a meeting between line managers to re-establish good working relationships or negotiate a compromise acceptable to both services.

Discussing concerns with senior management to explore strategic solutions or compromise.

Young People's Concerns

Young people going through the Joint Protocol should be made aware of complaints and comments procedure and appeal processes if relevant of each agency that is working with them.

Young people should be encouraged to seek legal advice when either a homeless decision or a decision under the Children Act 1989 has been made about them.

Northumberland County Council are able to commission independent advocacy support for young people, which can be accessed by Looked After Children, Care Leavers and Children in Need. Young People can be supported to access this service; where appropriate and information provided by the Lead Practitioner

Information Sharing

The effective working of the joint protocol relies on the sharing of information between agencies; it is of paramount importance that those agencies clearly acknowledge that any information relating to a service user is of a sensitive nature and must be kept confidential at all times.

All service users are asked for their permission to have their details both recorded and shared and may withdraw their permission at any time.

What is the Role of Partner Agencies?

Northumberland Adolescent Service - NAS

Services for 16 & 17 year olds classified as "in need" are delivered by NAS. 16 year olds who are still in Year 11 at school are always dealt with by the Locality Teams.

All Homeless 16 and 17 year olds must be referred to NAS. NAS will assess the needs of those young people who are immediately homeless and unable to return home; and will source appropriate emergency accommodation.

NAS will attend each initial panel meeting and become involved in all cases where:

- a young person directly presents to them
- young people are known to NAS (and there has not been a significant lapse in time since this involvement)
- Young people who are immediately homeless and unable to return home
- Young people are identified as having more complex needs. (For example, chaotic lifestyle with substance misuse issues)

The level of service offered by NAS will be dependent on the needs of the young person but will be compatible to the duties owed under the Children in Need procedures.

Housing Services

Homeless 16- and 17-year-olds can present directly to the housing authority. Under the protocol Housing Services will provide the initial response to all 16 and 17 year olds who they are already working with; who may present as homeless.

Housing Services will determine if the homelessness can be resolved with input from their service. Where this cannot be achieved, Housing Services will make a referral to the MASH to request an assessment of the young person's needs and arrangements for emergency accommodation by NAS

Where a young person is not immediately homeless but may require longer term accommodation, Housing Services will arrange for a Joint Protocol meeting to be held.

Housing Services will become involved in all cases where 16 and 17 year olds are presenting as homeless and a homelessness assessment is required under the Homelessness Reduction Act following the initial panel meeting.

Housing Services will have a duty to secure suitable accommodation for homeless 16 and 17 year olds where they are not a Child in Need or have refused support from the NAS, are found to be unintentionally homeless and in priority need and a return home is not an option.

It is not part of this protocol that every young person is automatically given a homelessness assessment under the Homelessness Reduction Act. It is recognised that this is not always the best course of action for the young person.

Early Help Family Work Locality Teams

The Early Help Family Work (EHFW) Service consists of 46 Early Help Family workers, who are co-located within Family hubs across all four localities in Northumberland. The Service is a front-line prevention and Early intervention service designed to provide improved outcomes for children, young people and families, providing them with the right support at the right time. The team support families with complex needs within a statutory framework and within the early help remit using a whole family approach.

Under the protocol the EHFW service will provide the initial response to all 16 and 17 year olds who they are already working with; who may present as homeless. They will determine if homelessness can be resolved with input from their service.

Where this cannot be achieved, they will make a referral to the MASH to request an assessment of the young person's needs and arrangements for emergency accommodation by NAS.

Where a young person is not immediately homeless but may require longer term accommodation, they will arrange for a Joint Protocol meeting to be held.

For any young people who are referred to Children's social care who have presented as homeless, if they meet the Early Help criteria, then an Early Help worker will be allocated to support that young person. If, however there is an immediate need for housing support then MASH / Accommodation team will support the young person to access appropriate emergency accommodation until

the EHFw is able to complete their assessment. As above, if there is not an immediate need for accommodation but longer term options need to be explored, the EHFw will arrange a Joint Protocol meeting.

Services within NAS

Where a young person is open to services within NAS (YJS, Accommodation Service and SORTED) under the protocol, the individual services within NAS will provide the initial response to all 16 and 17 year olds who they are already working with; who may present as homeless.

Services will determine if the homelessness can be resolved with input from their service. Where this cannot be achieved, Team Managers will need to have a discussion with the Team Manager of the 14+ Team re the issues of homelessness. A decision will be made to determine if a referral to First Contact is required to request an assessment of the young person's needs and arrangements for emergency accommodation.

Where a young person is not immediately homeless but may require longer term accommodation, services will arrange for a Joint Protocol meeting to be held.

Agreed Working Definitions

The Initial Response

This is the Multi Agency Referral form carried out by the agency where a young person originally presents and includes contacting the parents/carers to establish that the young person is actually homeless and to determine whether they can return home with support from universal services.

Eligible Young People

Young people aged 16 and 17 who are looked after by Children Services for at least 13 weeks (need not be consecutive weeks) since the age of 14 and who are still looked after on or after their 16th birthday.

Relevant Young People

Young people aged 16 and 17 who have been looked after by Children Services for at least 13 weeks (need not be consecutive weeks) since the age of 14 and who have left care.

Responsibility for both eligible and relevant children rests with Children Services.

Process for Accommodating Young People under Section 20

Where it is clear that a young person is unable to return home and in need of accommodation under Sec 20, staff from NAS need to initially discuss the situation with their relevant Team Manager.

Where the Team Manager is in agreement for the young person to become "looked after" under Sec 20 and the young person is agreeable, staff must

complete a CLA Request For a Child to be Looked After via ICS after discussions with the Specialist Services Manager for Northumberland Adolescent Services

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Legislative Context

R (on the application of G) v Southwark LBC

The Judgment in the case of R (on the application of G) v Southwark London Borough Council was given by the House of Lords on the 20th May 2009. The issue was “if a child of 16 or 17 who had been thrown out of the family home presents himself to a local Children’s Services authority and asks to be accommodated by them under section 20 of the Children Act 1989, is it open to the authority instead to arrange for him to be accommodated by the local housing authority under the homelessness provisions of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996”

The Judgement confirmed that Children’s Service authorities should presume that any lone, homeless child should be provided with accommodation under section 20(1) of the Children Act 1989, unless the child is not in the Local Authority’s judgement (based on an initial assessment under section 17, Children Act 1989), a child “in need”.

Prevention of Homelessness and provision of accommodation for 16- and 17-year-old young people who may become homeless and/or require accommodation - April 2018

Statutory guidance released by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government and the Department of Education in April 2018 reinforced the duties owed to young people under Part 3 of the Children Act 1989 and Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 as a result of the guidance, first published in April 2010; following the G-v-Southwark ruling in 2009.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/provision-of-accommodation-for-16-and-17-year-olds-who-may-be-homeless-and-or-require-accommodation>

Whilst Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 takes precedence, housing services also have duties towards young people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness; however, the range of duties owed by each service will depend on a range of factors and outcomes of any assessments or enquiries undertaken.

Whilst the guidance outlines the duties owed to young people should they become homeless, it is clear, that wherever possible; services should be supporting families to stay together. It is not unusual for 16 and 17year olds to have a turbulent relationship with their families, and this can lead to temporary disagreements and even temporary estrangement.

Where such disagreements look likely to lead to the young person becoming homeless or threatened with homelessness, Children’s Services should work proactively with the young person and their family to identify and resolve the issues that have led to the homelessness crisis; unless it would be unsafe or unsuitable for the young person to do so because they would be at risk of violence or abuse.

To this end, input from Early Help Services are paramount. The Early Help Service has a key role to play to help prevent homelessness within Northumberland; through targeted work with families deemed to be in crisis and this support can be provided by Early Help Family Workers (EHFW). Front door decision making would pick up this and refer into the most appropriate service which is likely to meet EHFW criteria.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018

Amended guidance was released by the Government in July 2018, hi-lighting the need for all organisations and agencies who have functions relating to children to work together to safeguard the health & wellbeing of children and young people up to the age of 18years.

This guidance applies to all local authorities, clinical commissioning groups, police and all other organisations such as schools and focuses on the core legal requirements, making it clear what individuals, organisations and agencies must and should do to keep children safe.

In doing so, it seeks to emphasise that effective safeguarding is achieved by putting children at the centre of the system and by every individual and agency playing their full part.

Children Act 1989

Section 17 places a general duty on Children Services to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need, by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children's needs.

A child in need is defined as someone who is aged under 18 and:

- is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision of appropriate services by a local authority, or
- whose health or development is likely to be significantly impaired or further impaired without the provision of appropriate services by a local authority, or
- who is disabled
- Section 17(5) allows Children Services to call upon other agencies (particularly voluntary and community organisations) to provide services on their behalf.
- Section 20(1) states that every local authority shall provide accommodation for any child in need within their area who requires accommodation as a result of:
 - there being no person who has parental responsibility for him
 - being lost or having been abandoned
 - the person who has been caring for him/her being prevented from providing suitable accommodation or care

Section 20(3) states that accommodation shall be provided for any child in need who has reached the age of 16 and whose welfare the authority considers is likely to be seriously prejudiced if they do not provide her or him with accommodation.

Under section 27 of the Children Act 1989, Children's Services can ask a housing authority to help in delivering services for children in need. The housing authority must comply with such a request to the extent that it is compatible with their own statutory duties and other obligations.

Guidance on the Act recommends that close liaison between Children's Services and housing is necessary and may be best achieved through the establishment of formal arrangements.

Children Act 2004

In autumn 2003 the Government published Every Child Matters Green Paper. This led to the Children Act 2004. The emphasis in the Act is on the increasing need for agencies to work together and establish procedures to enable the sharing of information about children and young people at risk. This means that joint protocols between agencies will play an increasingly important part in formalising processes between agencies.

Housing Act 1996

Parts VI and VII set out the legal framework for assisting homeless people and allocating housing.

Section 175: A person is homeless if they have no accommodation available in the UK or elsewhere, or if they cannot secure entry to it, or it is not reasonable for them to occupy it.

Section 189: A person is in priority need if they or their partner are pregnant, have dependent children, are vulnerable due to old age, mental illness or handicap or physical disability or other special reason, or are homeless as the result of an emergency. (Amended by Homelessness Act 2002)

Section 191: A person becomes homeless intentionally if they deliberately do, or fail to do, something that causes them to lose their accommodation.

Section 185: A person is not eligible for assistance if they are a person from abroad who is ineligible for housing assistance, or they are subject to immigration control.

Section 193: Local authorities have a duty to secure accommodation for two years (amended by Homelessness Act 2002) if the person is found to be eligible for assistance, in priority need and unintentionally homeless.

CLG Guidance on the Housing Act 1996 recommended that housing and Children's Services should have joint protocols in place to ensure that each play a full role in providing support to the client group.

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The [Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](#) significantly reformed England's homelessness legislation by placing duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas. It also requires housing

authorities to provide homelessness services to all those affected, not just those who have 'priority need'. These include:

- an enhanced prevention duty extending the period a household is threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days, meaning that housing authorities are required to work with people to prevent homelessness at an earlier stage; and
- a new duty for those who are already homeless so that housing authorities will support households for 56 days to relieve their homelessness by helping them to secure accommodation.

Homelessness Act 2002

Amended Parts VI and VII of the Housing Act 1996. The main changes which impact upon young people are:

- a duty on all local housing authorities to develop a strategic approach to tackling homelessness
- a new duty to provide long term accommodation for unintentionally homeless people in priority need the extension of the priority needs groups to include:
 - 16 and 17 year olds, whose support networks have broken down irrevocably and who are not owed a duty by social services as a relevant child or a child in need
 - 18 to 21 year olds leaving care who are former relevant children*, people aged 21 or over who are vulnerable due to being looked after, accommodated and fostered by the local authority, who are not relevant students
 - people who are vulnerable as a result of violence, being in the armed forces or in prison

Services with NAS

Youth Justice Service

The Youth Justice Service (YJS) is a prevention service and criminal justice agency that works with young people at risk of offending and with young people who have offended. The YJS works with young people up to the age of 18 years old. They offer support to their service users to access suitable accommodation, education, training and employment and other services.

SORTED

Sorted are the substance misuse service for young people in Northumberland. The service provides intervention for young people up to age 18 delivered by Northumberland County Council and commissioned by Northumberland Public Health.

The primary aim of the service is to provide direct harm reduction and interventions to young people under the age of 18 who have complex needs with regard to their substance use.

Accommodation Service

The accommodation service can provide support to young people who are at risk of homelessness and have no other identified needs that would require the support of an EHFV or a Social worker from a safeguarding team.

The service can look to complete early help assessments and look to support both the young person and their family to find the most appropriate support to meet the accommodation need.

Useful Contacts

| Service | Contact Number | Email |
|---|---|--|
| Homelessness Team | 0345 600 6400 (including out of hours) | housinghomeless@northumberland.gov.uk |
| Northumberland Adolescent Service NAS Duty | 01670 536 400 01670 536 400 | NasDuty@northumberland.gov.uk |
| Emergency Duty Team | 01670 536 400 | |
| First Contact/Children's Triage | 01670 536 400 | childrentriage@northumberland.gov.uk |