

**Joint housing protocol for Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People**

June 2023

# Content

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Introduction and Overview | 3 |
| Legislative Framework | 4 |
| Implementation and Development | 4 |
| Eligibility | 5 |
| Suitability of Support and Accommodation | 5 |
| Transition Planning and Needs Assessment | 6 |
| Additional Support to Care Leavers | 7 |
| Accommodation and Support Planning | 8 |
| Moving to Independent Accommodation | 8 |
| Responding to Care Leavers Leaving Custody | 9 |
| Care Leavers who are Homeless or at Risk of Homelessness | 10 |
| Duty to Refer | 11 |
| Care Leavers Living Outside of BCP | 12 |
| Care Leavers from outside BCP living in the local area | 13 |
| Local Connection for Care Leavers from outside BCP | 13 |
| Information Sharing | 14 |
| Dispute Resolution | 14 |

**1. ￼INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

1.1 The purpose of this protocol is to set out how BCP Council, Children’s Services and Housing Services will work together to provide effective, consistent and co-ordinated accommodation and support planning for Care Experienced Young People, from 17 years.

1.2 BCP Council’s Corporate Parenting Strategy: Brighter Futures for Our Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People (2023-2026) sets out our commitment to support young people in their transition to adulthood.  It is recognised that robust support and safe, suitable, and stable accommodation is fundamental to achieving this.

1.3 Both Children’s Services and Housing Options & Partnerships have a responsibility towards the practical application of this Protocol within their relevant services. The responsible senior leads are the Director for Corporate Parenting and Permanence in Children’s Services and the Director for Housing and Communities, and they have overall responsibility for the implementation of this Procotol, with oversight from the Corporate Parenting Board and the Youth Homelessness Board.

1.4 The Youth Homelessness Board will review this Protocol annually and agree any changes, informed by feedback from young people, staff, learning from individual cases and data which is provided to the Corporate Parenting Board and the Youth Homelessness Board on a quarterly basis.

1.5 This protocol is relevant across a range of teams within Children, Housing and Adult Services.  All professionals in these services are expected to be aware of the content of this protocol, current practice and research.  Teams that are responsible for assessing young people’s needs should have a shared understanding of their own and others’ duties to ensure needs are responded to appropriately.

1.6 The Protocol sets out a consistent and coordinated response and supports a streamlined, concise and clear pathway to navigate so that young people receive timely and appropriate support and access to services and accommodation that meets their needs.

1.7 The challenges that this protocol will address include reducing the number of placement moves, increased choice, assessment of young people’s needs, reduction in homeless applications and to ensure early planning of support and accommodation options. Central to the approach is the offer of tailored support, preventative work and fulfilment of statutory duties.  The main objective is to achieve sustainable long-term housing solutions for young people within BCP.

1.8 This Protocol should be considered alongside the Accommodation Planning Panel Terms of Reference, the BCP CEYP Support and Accommodation Offer, Accommodation Brochure, and the BCP Local Offer for CEYP. Professionals using this protocol should also refer to [The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (2010)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/959/contents/made) and [Care Planning Procedures.](https://www.proceduresonline.com/bcp/p_care_planning.html)

1.9 For young people who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and who meet eligibility criteria under the Care Act (2014), refer to the Preparing for Adulthood protocol which sets out how Children’s Services and Adult Services work together to meet the needs of care leavers who have additional needs.

1.10 This protocol has been informed by the views and experiences of young people through a series of workshops. The ongoing review and development of services is essential to meet the emerging needs of our young people. The annual review of the protocol will continue to be informed by the lived experience of our young people, collated through a variety of methods both directly and indirectly.

**2.** **LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK**

2.1 The introduction of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and related initiatives sought to strengthen the Children Act 1989 and provided an opportunity for local authorities to review the services provided to Care Experienced Young People transitioning to adulthood.  The following legislation and guidance emphasise the need for joint working between BCP’s Housing, Children’s and Adults Services, and other statutory, voluntary and private sector partners in preventing and tackling homelessness and meeting housing and support needs more effectively:

* Housing Act 1996 – [Part 6](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/part/VI) and [Part 7](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/part/VII), as amended by the [Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/13/contents)
* Section 1 of the [Homelessness Act 2002](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/7/contents)
* [Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/overview-of-the-homelessness-legislation#:~:text=The%20primary%20homelessness%20legislation%20%E2%80%93%20that,threatened%20with%20or%20actually%20homeless.)
* [Children and Social Work Act 2017](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/16/contents/enacted)
* Section 2 of the [Local Government Act 2000](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/22/contents)
* [Children Act 1989](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents)
* [Children Act 2004](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/contents)
* [Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/35/contents)
* [Joint Housing Protocols for Care Leavers: Good Practice Advice](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-housing-protocols-for-care-leavers/joint-housing-protocols-for-care-leavers-good-practice-advice)
* [Children and Young Persons Act 2008](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/23/contents)
* [Local Government Association Corporate Parenting Resource Pack](https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/15.74%20Corporate%20parenting_05_web.pdf)
* [Applying Corporate Parenting Principles to Looked After Children and Care Leavers: statutory guidance for local authorities](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)
* [Care Experience Matters: a guide to how prisons, probation and local authorities can work together to support people with care experience in custody and on probation](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-experience-matters)

**3.** **IMPLEMENTATION & DEVELOPMENT**

3.1 The Protocol will be embedded through training jointly developed and delivered by staff across all services to ensure consistent implementation.  This will include:

* Robust Face to face/virtual training and information sharing sessions, outlining the key aspects and statutory duties.
* Inclusion in mandatory induction training for new members of staff.
* Refresher training to be completed annually incorporating statutory and guidance updates as well as local service information.
* Information, advice, and guidance will be available from identified lead officers.
* Attendance at team meetings.

**4.** **ELIGIBLITY**

4.1 This Protocol applies to all young people that meet the criteria listed below.  There are specific statutory functions that apply, which each partner must abide by:

* Care Leavers who are aged 16-25 and previously a Child in Care as defined by the Children Act.  This includes eligible, relevant and former relevant Care Leavers.
* Care Leavers in custody.
* Care Leavers from BCP residing outside of the area.
* Care Leavers from outside of BCP, living within the BCP area (subject to eligibility under the [Homelessness Code of Guidance](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-10-local-connection-and-referrals-to-another-housing-authority))

More information around Care Leaver status can be found under [Leaving Care and](https://www.proceduresonline.com/bcp/p_leaving_care.html) Transitions.

**5.** **SUITABILITY OF SUPPORT AND ACCOMMODATION**

5.1 This Protocol recognises the need to ensure that young people are placed in suitable and safe accommodation.

5.2 Pathway Planning and the Joint Housing Assessment shall inform the individual appropriate accommodation pathway for a young person.  The multi-agency Accommodation Planning Panel facilitates this process as a single access point for professionals to gain joint agreement and approval for the most appropriate accommodation pathway for a young person in need of accommodation and support.

5.3 The young person’s voice is central to the success of their accommodation pathway; this is heard through the Joint Housing Assessment and Pathway Plan which reflect their needs and wishes.

5.4 The BCP CEYP Support and Accommodation Offer (Appendix 2) sets out the options which are available to young people.  There is also an Accommodation Brochure (Appendix 3) for professionals to use when discussing options with young people.

5.5 BCP recognises that the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation is not appropriate for young people.  BCP has access to a range of emergency accommodation services and whilst acknowledging that temporary and emergency accommodation is not ideal, when used Bed and Breakfast accommodation will be as a last resort, on a short-term basis, and agreed at Director level in both Housing and Children’s Services. BCP Council are committed to making this safe for the young person whilst new plans can be made with them using immediate bespoke wrap around support.

**6.** **TRANSITION PLANNING & NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

6.1 In our continuing commitment to robust planning and multi-agency work, alongside listening to the wishes and feelings of young people, BCP will ensure:

* A young person is allocated a Personal Adviser (PA) at 15 years and 9 months.
* The young person’s Social Worker remains the lead professional until they reach 18 years of age. The PA will take an active role in care planning and CIC reviews whilst building a relationship with the young person.
* The Pathway Plan sets out the young person’s needs.
* A Joint Housing Assessment takes place at 17 years, informed by the Pathway Plan.
* The Pathway Plan and Joint Housing Assessment, setting out the desired support and accommodation outcomes for the young person, are presented at the Accommodation Planning Panel.
* The young person continues to have CiC reviews, chaired by their Independent Reviewing Officer, until they reach 18 years.  IROs review the Pathway Plan and are responsible for ensuring that the young person’s support and accommodation needs once they leave care are being planned for and acted upon appropriately and without delay.

6.2 We recognise that many Care Leavers will not wish to nor have the necessary skills to live independently by the time they leave care.  We also recognise that many young people may no longer wish to reside in foster care (Staying Put). We are committed to offering a range of accommodation options that can provide appropriate support to meet varying needs.  This aligns with BCP’s Corporate Parenting strategy: Brighter Futures for Our Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People (2023-2026).

6.3 To meet the varying needs of our young people, BCP has a range of accommodation and support options.  These include in-house and commissioned services.  Options available to our young people are set out in our BCP CEYP Support and Accommodation Offer and Accommodation Brochure (Appendix 2 and 3).

6.4 Contingency planning is essential to mitigate risk of accommodation breakdowns and to avoid homelessness.  Early review and support planning is detailed within the Accommodation Planning Panel documents and provides the opportunity for professionals to review and change the accommodation pathway and support plans with a young person as needed.  Consideration of contingency planning will be discussed at the Accommodation Planning Panel and ratified as part of the panel decision making.  Any changes will be documented within the young person’s Pathway Plan.

**7.** **ADDITIONAL SUPPORT TO CARE LEAVERS**

7.1 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires Children’s Services to publish a Local Offer for Care Leavers, outlining services and support available.  BCP Council’s [Local Offer for Young Adults Leaving Our Care](https://www.bcppartnershipacademy.co.uk/Resources/LearningZone/Articles-and-Reports/Local-Offer-Young-adults-Leaving-our-care-June-2022.pdf) is available online for Care Leavers and provides information on housing, financial and support services, accommodation options, planning and agencies to contact in the event of homelessness.  Care Leavers may also be entitled to a discount on their Council Tax and further information can be found [here](https://www.bcpcouncil.gov.uk/Council-Tax/Council-Tax-discounts-and-exemptions/Care-leaver-care-experienced-young-person-discount.aspx).

7.2 BCP has a dedicated Accommodation Support Team. Through the Accommodation Planning Panel, their role is to work alongside other services to co-ordinate and oversee support for young people in a range of accommodation options, ensuring the accommodation is of an appropriate standard, helping to co-ordinate accommodation moves in a planned way and supporting other professionals to proactively address and mitigate against tenancies at risk. The team is responsible for the A2B and ‘Always There’ schemes which offer accommodation and support for young people who would otherwise be placed in Bed & Breakfast provision, and also for young people living independently.

7.3 The use of the AQA model to evidence progress of YP enables informed assessment and planning to underpin any accommodation and support pathway agreed at Accommodation and planning panel.

7.4 A dedicated CEYP Housing Officer works closely with social workers, PAs and the Accommodation Support Team to carry out Joint Housing Assessments with young people.  The Joint Housing Assessment identifies the appropriate housing and support pathway to meet the young person’s needs when they leave care.  This Housing Officer is a member of the Accommodation Planning Panel and acts as a ‘champion’ to support Housing and Children’s Services colleagues in relation to Housing legislation, guidance and the CEYP Support and Accommodation Offer.

7.5 BCP recognises the need to support our Care Leavers in their aspirations and to achieve in life.  BCP offers additional financial support to Care Leavers who require accommodation whilst completing higher education, as set out in the Local Offer for Young Adults Leaving Our Care.

7.6 There is a robust process in place with Revenue & Benefits to access Discretionary Housing Payments on behalf of CEYP in need of financial support to secure and sustain tenancies. All staff are prompted through the protocol training and local processes to ensure early review and intervention is key to ensure that care leavers can sustain their accommodation, and this includes financial viability and sustainability.  The Accommodation Planning Panel considers these as part of the accommodation pathway discussion for every young person.

**8.** **ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT PLANNING**

8.1 BCP Council recognises that assessment of need, careful planning, and listening to the young person’s voice is essential for effective transition planning and avoiding homelessness for a young person.

8.2 A person-centred approach to planning will be taken with every young person to establish what support and accommodation they need, and this will be agreed and reflected in their Pathway Plan and Personal Housing Plan.

8.3 A recommended accommodation and support pathway for a young person is presented to the Accommodation Planning Panel following a joint housing assessment when the young person reaches 17 years.

8.4 The Accommodation Planning Panel is a multi-agency meeting in which relevant professionals consider recommendations for a young person’s accommodation and support pathway.  Key representatives attend from Children's Commissioning, CEYP Service, Housing Options and Partnerships and the In-House Fostering Accommodation Support Team.  Where relevant, other agencies such as Adult Services, Transitions Team, Health, Probation, etc will attend as required.

8.5 The Accommodation Planning Panel will consider reviews of a young person’s existing arrangements and explore progress made, any issues in the agreed accommodation and support pathway, risks of breakdown and additional support that may be required for the young person to prevent loss of accommodation.  The PA or Housing Officer can submit a request for review to the Accommodation Planning Panel.

8.6 The PA will keep the young person informed about the panel process and confirm the outcome of the panel’s discussion around their accommodation plan.

8.7 In the event that a young person is not satisfied with the outcome of the Accommodation Planning Panel, the young person can appeal.  The young person will need to consider the reasons why they feel the outcome is not satisfactory and should discuss this with their PA.  If the young person wishes for their accommodation plan to be reconsidered, they must, with support from their PA, provide a written request outlining their reasons for this.  Appeals will be reviewed by the team manager before being submitted to and presented at the Accommodation Planning Panel for review.

**9.** **MOVING TO INDEPENDENT ACCOMMODATION**

9.1 Where an independent tenancy for a young person has been agreed as part of their accommodation pathway the PA and Housing officer will consider the skills, vulnerabilities and needs of the young person.  It is unlikely that a young person will be able to access their own tenancy whilst they are under the age of 18 however where it is deemed necessary the support and legal arrangements will be agreed at panel and put in place.

9.2 When it is identified that a young person is ready to move onto the next stage of their accommodation pathway this will be planned with the young person, PA, Housing Officer and any other agencies involved, to ensure a move is successful and the young person receives the support they need with the move and thereafter in their accommodation.

9.3 Where the Panel agrees as part of a young person’s accommodation plan that they will apply for social housing, they will be supported to register and a priority banding will be awarded as per the [BCP Council Housing Allocations Policy](https://bcphomechoice.org/choice/uploads/BCP%20Housing%20Allocations%20Policy%202020%20V3%2024082021.pdf) for care experienced young people. In some cases, owing to the level of needs and risks where it is deemed necessary by the CEYP team and Housing Options, a young person may be awarded a direct let. Please see the CEYP Support and Accommodation Offer document (Appendix 2) for more information.

9.4 Where the Panel agrees as part of a young person’s accommodation plan that they will secure private rented accommodation they will be assisted with advice and guidance around affordability as well as support with upfront payments such as bonds or rent in advance payments.  Please see the CEYP Support and Accommodation Offer document (Appendix 2) for more information.

9.5 The young person will continue to receive support when they move into their own accommodation. Their support will be delivered through their PA, Young Person Floating Support, ‘Always There’ carers and an enhanced housing management service where they are a BCP Homes tenant. The levels of support will vary in line with what the young person needs and will include other stakeholders for specialist support. The support package will be reviewed by the PA with the young person and continue as necessary until it is agreed with the young person it is no longer needed.

**10.**  **RESPONDING TO CARE LEAVERS LEAVING CUSTODY**

10.1 BCP recognises the need to ensure appropriate pre-release planning is in place for young people who are due to be released from custody, to ensure a smooth transition into safe and suitable accommodation.

10.2 When a young person is identified as due for release from custody, a ‘duty to refer’ will be made by the young person’s PA to alert Housing.  A Joint Housing Assessment will be undertaken with the young person, their PA, allocated Housing Officer and their Probation or Youth Justice Officer.  This will identify the young person’s accommodation and support needs to inform the recommended accommodation pathway for agreement at the Accommodation Planning Panel.  The young person’s Pathway Plan and Personal Housing Plan will reflect the recommendations.

10.3 Where a Joint Housing Assessment and Pathway Plan were completed prior to the period of custody, these will be reviewed and updated with any necessary changes to reflect the young person’s current needs and to inform a review discussion at the Accommodation Planning Panel.

**11.** **RESPONDING TO CARE LEAVERS WHO ARE HOMELESS OR AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS**

11.1 BCP Council has a duty under both Homelessness legislation and as a corporate parent to ensure the best interests of the young person are accounted for, encourage the young person to express their wishes and feelings and to promote high aspirations and seek the best outcomes for Care Leavers. Further information can be found in [Chapter 22 of the Homelessness code of guidance.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-housing-protocols-for-care-leavers/joint-housing-protocols-for-care-leavers-good-practice-advice)

11.2 Care Leavers under homelessness legislation are defined as being in priority need for assistance.

11.3 Former relevant Care Leavers aged between 18 and 25 (defined under the Children’s Act (Leaving Care) who are owed a service by BCP Council may present at Housing Options & Partnerships if they are homeless or at risk of homelessness.  The Housing duty staff will carry out an assessment to determine homelessness.  As a care leaver, the young person may be able to get assistance from the CEYP Team, depending on their circumstances.  The Housing duty worker will make the young person aware of this and request consent for their circumstances to be shared with their PA.  If consent is given, Housing Options & Partnerships will work in conjunction with the PA to review their accommodation plan and identify suitable accommodation or work to prevent homelessness.

11.4 The PA or Housing Officer will submit a request for review to the Accommodation Planning Panel.

11.5 Prevention work will include collaborative working alongside council agencies (such as the CEYP team, Housing Options & Partnerships) to:

* Provide support to help sustain a tenancy, including specialist services
* Consider use of Discretionary Housing Payments / Children’s Services funding to address rent arrears or use alternative Payment Arrangements to enable Universal Credit (UC) housing costs to be paid direct to landlords
* Liaise with the young person’s PA, landlord and other agencies to help address concerns.

11.6 Where possible, the panel will consider accommodation options within BCP’s commissioned services for young people in the first instance, if prevention is not appropriate.  In some instances, it may not be possible for the panel to identify accommodation within existing services for young people in a planned way; in which case joint work and consultation with the Housing Options & Partnerships will be undertaken in order to determine appropriate, safe accommodation.

11.7 Housing Options & Partnerships will consider whether there is a duty owed to the care leaver under Part 7 of the 1996 Act to secure accommodation.  Housing Options & Partnerships will consult with the young person’s PA to discuss suitability and vulnerabilities of young people before making an offer of temporary accommodation.

11.8 When prevention or relief duties are triggered a Personalised Housing Plan (PHP) for the young person will be developed.  Housing Options & Partnerships will align this with the young person’s Pathway Plan and accommodation pathway plan, therefore discussing and sharing information about the Housing Plan with their PA (if consent is given).  The PA will be included in ongoing reviews of the PHP for the young person.

11.9 If Housing Options & Partnerships places a young person in temporary accommodation in an emergency, additional support services will be put in place and reviewed thereafter at the Accommodation Planning Panel, along with an updated accommodation plan.

11.10 Housing Options & Partnerships must be aware of their duties to Care Leavers and their priority need status in relation to the needs and experiences of Care Leavers.  Given this, a decision regarding intentional homelessness must be considered alongside the young person’s experiences via discussion with the PA. If Housing Options & Partnerships are satisfied an intentional decision should be made, and there is evidence that all support and accommodation options have been exhausted, the Director of Housing & Communities and the Director of Corporate Parenting will be notified of the decision so corporate agreement about the approach taken with the young person around any further support from Children’s Services can be co- ordinated and delivered in conjunction with a full written response from Housing.

**12.** **DUTY TO REFER**

12.1 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places duties on local housing authorities to intervene at an early stage to prevent homelessness and provide homelessness services to all those who are eligible. The ‘duty to refer’ responsibility helps to ensure that services are working together effectively to prevent homelessness by ensuring that peoples’ housing needs are considered when they come into contact with public authorities. All Duty to Refers are received by Housing Options & Partnerships within BCP Council.

12.2 A duty to refer should only be made for a care experienced young person where they require homelessness intervention and are not already open to Housing Options & Partnerships and don’t have in place an accommodation and support pathway agreed through the accommodation planning panel.

12.3 Early review and support planning is detailed within the Accommodation Planning Panel documents and provides the opportunity for professionals to review and change the accommodation pathway and support plans with a young person as needed to prevent homelessness.

12.4 Where there is an immediate and unplanned loss of accommodation a duty to refer may have to be made and the young person’s accommodation pathway reviewed and updated at the Accommodation Planning Panel as a result.

12.5 When a young person approaches a service outside of Housing and is at risk of homelessness, the service should ascertain details regarding their circumstances and consider, with appropriate consent, as to whether a Duty to Refer needs to be completed.  The service should ensure that the young person is fully aware of the purpose of the duty to refer and gives consent to share and submit the required information.

12.6 Housing Options & Partnerships will ensure that the young person is made aware of the next step in the process and that a joint assessment will be carried out or an existing one reviewed with their social worker/personal advisor to agree the next course of action to be taken.  This could include prevention work, a re-referral into the Accommodation Panel or further work by Housing to consider whether there is a duty owed to the young person, under Homelessness legislation.

12.7 Information on Duty to Refers received will be shared at the Accommodation Planning Panel for further action to be taken as necessary.  For information and guidance on the Duty to Refer please access the government legislation via the link [A Guide to the Duty to Refer](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-duty-to-refer/a-guide-to-the-duty-to-refer).

**13.** **CARE LEAVERS LIVING OUTSIDE OF BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE**

13.1 In some instances, it may be beneficial or in line with the wishes and feelings of the young person, to remain or move to another local authority area.  Reasons for moving out of area or remaining out of area are dependent on individual circumstances but examples include their care placement was out of area, family connections to another area or to attend education or employment.

13.2 If a young person wishes to remain in an area outside of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, planning is essential to secure appropriate accommodation and support to meet their needs.  For all young people aged 17 and over cases should be presented at the Accommodation Planning Panel at the earliest opportunity where this has been identified through their Pathway Plan to ensure that the social worker / PA can make enquires as to housing options in the area alongside discussions with the Leaving Care Teams of both LAs.

13.3 If a young person is found to be owed a homeless duty by the Housing Department where they reside, the Housing Department has a statutory duty to notify BCP on where the young person has been placed and engage with the PA to ensure the Pathway plan and Personal Housing Plan are reflective of the wider needs of the young person.

**14.** **CARE LEAVERS FROM OUTSIDE OF BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE LIVING IN THE LOCAL AREA**

14.1 The Homelessness Reduction Act placed additional duties on local authorities to respond to housing needs of Care Leavers who live outside of the local authority that looked after them (or parent authority).  The parent authority will owe the care leaver a duty as a former relevant young person and they will retain a local connection to their parent authority until their 21st birthday.

14.2 In addition, a Care Leaver can also have a local connection to the local authority where they were resident for a continuous period of 2 years, provided at least some of that time was when they were under the age of 16.

14.3 If a Care Leaver approaches BCP Housing Options & Partnerships or a Duty to refer is received, and they were not looked after by BCP, Housing Options & Partnerships will look to consider if they have a local connection to the BCP area, using the above guidance.  If a care leaver has been resident in the BCP area for longer than 2 years (with at least some of that time being before their 16th birthday) BCP Council will offer a prevention/relief duty following the usual processes.

14.4 If the Care Leaver is found to not have a local connection to the BCP area, Housing Options & Partnerships will consider how to best support the care leaver, including consideration of short term temporary accommodation, alongside discussion with the parent authority and relevant personal adviser.

**15.** **LOCAL CONNECTION FOR CARE LEAVERS FROM OUTSIDE OF BOURNEMOUTH,**  **CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE**

15.1 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, introduced new responsibilities to local authorities to offer homelessness assistance to Care Leavers who have resided in a local area for 2 years or more.

15.2 If a care leaver living in the BCP area, but away from the ‘parent’ authority presents as homeless, Housing Options & Partnerships will assess their circumstances and, if consent is given, contact the personal advisor from their parent authority to ensure the young person is aware of the Offer for care leavers in their ‘parent’ authority.  If temporary accommodation is required, Housing Options & Partnerships will conduct an assessment of need around accommodation and support.  If requested, BCP’s CEYP team may be able to assist with duty tasks to help support the young person (i.e. arranging transport, monies, etc).

15.3 The duty to assess need and housing options will rest with Housing Options & Partnerships and the parent local authority Leaving Care Team to ensure appropriate access to support and accommodation.

**16.** **INFORMATION SHARING**

16.1 Effective application of this protocol relies on the sharing of information between agencies.  It is the responsibility of each agency to adhere to their own data protection policy and ensure that any information relating to a young person that is of a sensitive nature must be kept confidential at all times.

16.2 Every young person in receipt of Housing services will sign a consent declaration giving permission for the sharing of information in order to secure support and accommodation.

16.3 Every Joint Housing Assessment is conducted with the young person, their social worker or PA and Housing Officer and facilitates the sharing of relevant information to arrive at an accommodation pathway for the young person.

16.4 Pathway Plans are undertaken collaboratively with young people and should include a discussion between the young person and their social worker or PA about what information is included in the Pathway Plan, and what can be shared with other professionals.

**17.** **DISPUTE RESOLUTION**

17.1 In the event that it is not possible for the two agencies to agree responsibility for actions and tasks, the matter shall be referred to the responsible line managers who will hold discussions and agree responsibilities within 2 working days of the Joint Housing Assessment.

17.2 In the event that it is not possible for line managers to agree responsibilities identified in the Joint Housing Assessment, the matter will be escalated to the Service Lead within Social Care and to the Housing Response Manager within Housing Options & Partnerships. Discussions will be held within a further 2 working days and a decision as to the responsibilities will be made and recorded in the Joint Housing Assessment and Pathway Plan.

17.3 Where agreement between professionals around a care leaver’s housing pathway cannot be reached the Terms of Reference for the Accommodation Planning Panel will be followed and the matter will be escalated by the Chair to the Director of Housing & Communities and the Director of Corporate Parenting for a final decision to be made.

17.4 Where there is disagreement between professionals around needs and risks of the young person and what action should be taken the [Pan-Dorset Multi-agency Escalation Policy](https://proceduresonline.com/trixcms/media/4796/pan-dorset-escalation-policy-v10-jun-2019.pdf) will be followed.

17.5 Pathway Plans and Joint Housing Assessments are undertaken collaboratively with young people and their views are paramount and should be clearly recorded.  If however a young person is not in agreement with the recommended outcomes and this cannot be resolved, they can make a complaint under BCP’s Complaints Procedures.  There is a statutory process for young people to make a complaint and further information can be found [here.](https://www.bcpcouncil.gov.uk/Contact-us/Feedback-and-Complaints/Docs/CSC-Docs/Complaint-Leaflet-YP.pdf)

17.6 In the event of a young person or their representative disagreeing with the outcome of a Housing decision under the Housing Act 1996 then the statutory appeal process will apply. What the applicant and/or their representative has to do and by when is set out in the decision letter they receive. The young person’s PA will support them with this process.

17.7 All Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People are entitled to receive independent advocacy.  It is the responsibility of the social worker or PA to ensure this is offered and make a referral for advocacy support through ART.