1. **Introduction**

This document sets out the range of support and accommodation options BCP Council provides to meet the needs of

* care experienced young people aged 18 to 25 years as they move into adulthood and progress into independent accommodation as part of their pathway planning
* 16 and 17 year olds who approach as homeless

There is an agreed joint commitment from Childrens Services, Housing, BCP Homes and Children’s Commissioning to provide sufficient support and quality accommodation to all our young people whether it is part of a longer-term pathway or their final move into independence.

Every care experienced young person’s pathway plan and joint housing needs assessment setting out their support and accommodation pathway will be agreed at the Accommodation Planning Panel.

Every 16 and 17 year old who presents as homeless will through a joint housing needs assessment have an accommodation plan.

Our accommodation and support offer has been put in place recognising that some of our older (21 to 25 years) care leavers will continue to require support to access and sustain accommodation.  BCP Council continues to review existing services and develop new and innovative options through any additional Government funding opportunities.

1. **Multi Agency Partners Supporting the Offer**
* BCP Homes staff – involved in the sign up of properties, housing management and tenancy support of tenants.
* Children’s Social Care (CSC) staff including Personal Advisors – involved in the planning and support of a care experienced young person’s support and accommodation.
* Children’s Commissioning – involved in the procurement and quality assurance of support and accommodation services for care experienced young people.
* Housing Options & Partnerships staff – involved in providing the advice and guidance around a young person’s housing options as part of their pathway planning and procurement and quality assurance of supported housing and provision of emergency accommodation as a last resort.
1. **CSC Personal Advisor (PA) / Social Worker (SW) Roles**

A social worker or personal advisor is there to help a care experienced young person to prepare to live independently and to offer advice and support after they leave the care of the Local Authority. As a young adult, CSC are here to support with decisions and life choices. CSC will always try to ensure that care experienced young people are able to keep the same social worker or personal advisor, though this may not always be possible.

The PA / SW will ensure an identified property is comfortable for a care experienced young person by ensuring that there is appropriate furniture, flooring, and a settling-in pack. The suitability and appropriateness of the property would be identified upon the initial compulsory viewing of both the PA and the young person prior to signing of any tenancy agreement and their subsequent moving. Where there no appropriate white goods, the PA will support the young person to request financial assistance through the CEYP home support grant to purchase the requisite furniture for the accommodation. The PA will act as an advocate for the CEYP in all housing moves.

1. **Care Experienced Young Person’s** **Pathway Plan**

All care experienced young people aged 16 years and over have a Pathway Plan. The Pathway Plan will replace the Care Plan. The Pathway Plan is written in conjunction with the social worker, PA and care experienced young person. The Pathway Plan is about the care experienced young person’s holistic needs and whose responsibility it is to ensure they can achieve their dreams and ambitions and become a successful adult. It includes key aspects of a person life such as accommodation, budgeting, health, education, training and employment.

1. **Accommodation and Support Options**
2. Supported Accommodation Offer

BCP Council commission supported housing services for homeless young people across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

For every service there is a contract in place with the provider of the accommodation and support which sets out the required service delivery, criteria, and quality standards the provider must meet. Every service is performance monitored by the team.

Access to these services is through Housing and a care experienced young person’s social worker or PA will support them to make a referral if it is identified through a joint housing needs assessment that this option will meet their needs as set out in their pathway plan. These services are utilised for all young people who are homeless and will include young people who are not care experienced. We ensure through assessment that the most in need are prioritised.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Service** | **Age range** | **No of units** | **Level of support** | **Type of accommodation** |
| James Michael House | 18 – 21 years | 15 | Low level - visiting | Flats |
| Sevenoaks | 16 – 17 years | 14 | High support - 24 hour | Hostel and 4 flats |
| Richmond Park Road | 18 – 21 years | 5 | Low level - visiting | Shared house |
| Christchurch Young People Service | 18 – 21 years | 10 | Low level - visiting | 3 x shared houses |
| Robert Gabriel House | 18 – 21 years | 5 | High support – 24 hour | Shared house |

1. Floating Support

In addition to the supported accommodation, 1 full time worker is commissioned to deliver floating support into young people’s homes. Floating Support will be agreed as part of a young person’s accommodation pathway and allocated through the Accommodation Planning Panel or by Housing Options. This worker will support young people:

* when they first move into their independent home so they can adjust to living on their own and all the new responsibilities this brings.
* when they are staying in emergency/temporary accommodation and is delivered in addition to the PA and other support that may have been agreed to ensure the young person is fully supported whilst they are not in settled accommodation.

A Mental Health Floating Support service delivers floating support to people with a mental health diagnosis in their own homes. The level of support can vary dependent on the needs of the person and can increase and reduce as needed to ensure they maintain their tenancy. Referrals to this service are made directly to the provider and a young person can make a self-referral. More information can be found at [Mental Health Floating Support Service (bcha.org.uk)](https://www.bcha.org.uk/our-services/supported-housing/mental-health-support-services/mental-health-floating-support-service/)

1. Independent Accommodation

Social Housing - A care experienced young person is eligible to apply to [BCP Homechoice](https://bcphomechoice.org/choice/) to gain access to social housing. They will be supported to register their application by their PA and at this point can request assisted bidding. The assisted bidding service is there for people who would like the team to bid on their behalf for any properties that come up within their stated preferences, rather than bidding themselves for properties.

The BCP Council’s Allocations Policy sets out the commitment that where it is deemed necessary by the CEYP team and Housing Options and Partnerships, owing to the level of needs and risks, a care experienced young person may be awarded Gold band – Care Leaver Move on. These decisions are made at the Accommodation Planning Panel. This gives young people a high priority, but consideration of other options will continue as there are competing pressures for the scarce social housing from other cohorts of people in need of housing.

In some cases, owing to the level of needs and risks where it is deemed necessary by the CEYP team and Housing Options, a care experienced young person may be awarded a direct let. This means a property is identified and allocated without a bidding process. These decisions are made at the Accommodation Planning Panel.

BCP Council will aim to let a percentage of available properties to applicants in specific bands. The quota percentage, in each group, will be monitored and reviewed annually. Based on affordability, location, type of property and knowledge of area, the Housing

Allocations Team will identify suitable properties and advertise as "Priority to be given to applicants with Gold band for Care Leavers’.

When a care experienced young person has been successful in bidding on a property, they will have the opportunity to view it with their PA, agree suitability and confirm acceptance before signing up to a tenancy.

1. BCP Homes (Council stock) – Service standards

Expectations will be managed during discussions around service standards to make it clear what decorating, furnishings etc will be available to young people when they move in.

Housing will advise young people as soon as possible about approximate timescales for the completion of any void works and any shared facilities within the property, property size and layout.

The property will be decorated, and flooring provided by BCP Homes in addition to any standard void works and planned maintenance.

The type of flooring will be agreed with the PA, after discussion with the care experienced young person to reflect their wishes, however, costs will need to be reasonable in terms of price and suitability for the property as agreed by BCP Homes. For example, hard flooring may not be appropriate where sound proofing is poor.

The care experienced young person and their PA will be kept up to date with any void works and estimated ready to let dates.

Adaptations will be provided to meet the needs of a care experienced young person and any carers as required.

All care experienced young people will be granted an introductory tenancy and if after 12 months there have been no issues this will be converted to a secure tenancy. Terms & Conditions of the tenancy will be shared with the care experienced young person and any professionals supporting the care experienced young person prior to a sign up, so these can be discussed and confirmed with the care experienced young person.

The BCP Homes Housing officer will carry out additional new tenant visits. These will be carried out within weeks 3-4 and 6-8 of their new tenancy. The purpose of these visits is to ensure the care experienced young person is satisfied with their new home, fully understands the terms and conditions of their tenancy, is confident in raising repairs, concerns and complaints and answer any other general queries.

BCP Homes ‘Your Money Team’ (YMT) will make contact once a sign up is complete. The purpose of this contact shall be to ensure that any changes to their financial situation is reflected in the Benefits received, to offer financial support including signposting to services and to ensure the care experienced young person is receiving their full entitlement of Benefits.

If continued support from YMT is not required the team will make contact again 6 months into the tenancy, to ensure that any changes to the care experienced young person’s finances are accounted for and offer support as needed.

When a care experienced young person signs up as a new tenant, the Income Recovery Officer (IRO) will be made aware. If during their tenancy the rent arrears exceed 1 week, the IRO will work with the care experienced young person and PA or Support worker. When necessary, a case conference shall be held to offer support, discuss payment plans and work in partnership with the care experienced young person to reach a solution and maintain their tenancy.

BCP Homechoice includes properties owned by registered social landlords in the BCP area. Where a care experienced young person, or Housing on their behalf, are bidding on properties they may secure a property with one of our registered social landlords. This will be a Housing Association registered with the regulator of social housing. We would hope to secure the same higher void standards similar to BCP Homes but this is not a requirement for Housing Associations. They will have their own void standard whereby the provision of decorating and flooring are often the tenant’s responsibility. The sourcing and funding of additional works over and above normal void works will need to be agreed and organised by Children’s Services in discussion with the Housing Association and on occasion Childrens Services may decide to fund this if the Housing Association is not able to.

1. Private Rented Sector

Where a private rented property is identified as a suitable option within the joint housing needs assessment, the Housing Officer and PA where applicable will support a young person to source an affordable and sustainable option. Rent deposit, rent in advance and other landlord incentives will be funded by Housing Options and Partnerships.

In all cases where a care experienced young person moves into independent accommodation, they will receive a setting up home grant provided by Children’s Services to fund items such as white goods and other costs associated with moving into their first home. The care experienced young person will be supported by their PA as documented in their Pathway Plan.

Housing will provide visiting support to the young person to assist the transition to independent accommodation from a supported environment. The support will be regularly reviewed and provided until such time that professionals decide it is no longer required.

1. CSC Commissioned Training Flats

CSC and Housing have a Letter of Agreement in place for three training flat properties within BCP, CSC hold the tenancies for these properties. The properties are not subject to the BCP Homes void process; however a higher-level void standard will be provided.

Children’s Commissioning on behalf of CSC is responsible for ensuring the properties are fit for occupation, any property maintenance shall be requested in agreement with BCP Homes, the HRA shall fund, and Children’s Commissioning shall notify housing

that specification of potential works needs to be completed, following agreed processes.

The training flats are designed for short term lease arrangements to Children In Care (CiC) or a care experienced young person (CEYP) in order that they are afforded an opportunity to experience independent living prior to their final move.

CSC is responsible for the care needs of any child in care or care experienced young person whilst they reside in the training flats. CSC shall ensure that any young person residing in the properties are:

* issued a lease agreement
* have an allocated lead professional (PA and or social worker)
* assisted to move into the property and shown how the appliances etc work
* visited at least weekly and made aware of who to contact outside of working hours

Decisions on who shall access the training flats will as part of their accommodation pathway plan be made at the Accommodation Planning Panel.

1. CSC Externally Commissioned Accommodation

CSC have commissioned other suitable accommodation for care experienced young people, this is designed as a stepping-stone to independent living prior to their final move or signing of their own tenancy. The accommodation provision has been commissioned from BCP Housing or private landlords and CSC hold the tenancies.

The properties are not subject to the BCP Homes void process. Children’s Commissioning on behalf of CSC is responsible for ensuring the properties are fit for occupation, any property maintenance shall be requested. A care experienced young person shall use their ‘setting up home’ allocation to furnish the properties. CSC shall ensure that any young person residing in the properties are:

* issued a lease agreement
* have an allocated lead professional (PA and or social worker)
* assisted to move into the property
* visited / supported as documented within their Pathway Plan

When commissioning the properties each provider undergoes an accreditation to ensure the accommodation they are offering is of the required standard. Any concerns regarding the property standards should be reported by the CSC PA to Children’s Commissioning.

Decisions on who shall access this accommodation as part of their accommodation pathway plan will be made at the Accommodation Planning Panel.

1. CSC In-House Fostering Service offer

All care experienced young people can be considered for the accommodation and support options below through the Accommodation Planning Panel.

* **Supported Lodgings accommodation -** the accommodation is offered within a family home and the care experienced young person is supported by a Supported

Lodgings carer. The level of care shall vary depending on the assessed needs of the care experienced young person. Housing Benefit shall be claimed for.

* **‘Always There’ scheme** – offers 1:1 outreach support as part of a wraparound package to ensure the young person is able to sustain their accommodation. Current Supported Lodgings or Foster Carers deliver a bespoke support package based on assessed need. The service is modelled on extended family support i.e dropping around to get your laundry done, invited around for Sunday dinner, spending Christmas and/or special occasions at home. A referral form must be submitted to fostering.duty@bcpcouncil.gov.uk and supportedlodgings18@bcpcouncil.gov.uk to access this service.
* **A2B Scheme** - Supported Lodgings Carers offer temporary accommodation to care experienced young people who would otherwise find themselves having to access accommodation, either in the form of Bed and Breakfast or HMO via homeless legislation. A care experienced young person accessing this scheme is identified by Housing Options and community services alongside the Care Experienced Young People’s Team as needing supported housing. This enables otherwise vulnerable young people to be in a supportive home environment while suitable long term housing arrangements are sourced. A referral form must be submitted to fostering.duty@bcpcouncil.gov.uk and supportedlodgings18@bcpcouncil.gov.uk to access this accommodation.
* **Support Services -** AQA Scheme - The Fostering Adolescence Team Manager has overseen the launch of the AQA scheme, part of which has been providing portfolios to each of our 16+ young people with in house Carers as well as training to Carers and staff. This is a positive tool in supporting our young people to develop and evidence their independence skills and also contribute to assisting with housing applications when they choose to move to independent living. This service is accessed through the yong person’s PA.
1. Temporary and Emergency Accommodation

All BCP care experienced young people will have a pathway plan and joint housing needs assessment in place by the age of 17 years which sets out their support and accommodation needs into adulthood. Sometimes options are not successful or following an incident or crisis an alternative support and accommodation option needs to be sourced at short notice. Whilst temporary and emergency accommodation is not ideal, BCP Council are committed to making this as safe and sustainable for the short term to safeguard the care experienced young person so new plans can be made with them.

These options are short term only and the care experienced young person’s support network will be working with the Accommodation Planning Panel so alternative longer term arrangements can be made as quickly as possible. Risk measures include carrying out risk assessments of the people placed in the accommodation, considering the mix of people placed in any one accommodation and arranging the right level of support.

This support will include tasks such as making a homeless application, assisting to move on from the emergency accommodation when a longer term option has been arranged and any day to day needs that arise. A care experienced young person will be supported to make homeless applications only as a last resort and we commit to agreeing contingency housing plans for those in precarious housing situations so as to avoid crisis & homelessness. The types of emergency accommodation which may be offered are:

* **In-House Foster Care Service** may offer ‘A2B’ accommodation, where B&B is not deemed suitable or there is no availability. This is family environment offered by an inhouse carer in their home. The inhouse carer provides support and guidance in addition to the PA visiting whilst waiting for their identified move on accommodation. A referral form must be submitted to fostering.duty@bcpcouncil.gov.uk and supportedlodgings18@bcpcouncil.gov.uk to access this accommodation.
* **Joint Living Properties** - Joint living properties are those owned by the Council, managed by the housing team, for homeless customers as temporary accommodation. They are houses of multiple occupation (HMO) these are properties rented to at least 3 people who are not from 1 'household' but share facilities like the bathroom and kitchen. They provide a more settled environment than B&B accommodation for homeless applicants before more settled accommodation can be secured. Some property security is provided out of hours via security staff and CCTV. Housing will provide a Resettlement Officer to work with the care experienced young person whilst they are in this accommodation and CSC will provides a wrap-around support package such as ‘Always There’ (please see page 6). These are accessed through the allocated Housing Officer.
* **Dorset Nightstop** - provides safe, secure emergency accommodation for Dorset young people aged 18-25 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The Nightstop service, will welcome the care experienced young person into the home of a fully trained volunteer host. Placements are on a one night at a time basis for a maximum of three nights. These are accessed through the allocated Housing Officer or PA completing a referral and risk assessment. Telephone 01202 525643 and e-mail dorsetnightstop@actionforchildren.org.uk
* **Supported Accommodation Crashpad** – provides safe and supported accommodation to 16/17yr olds. The offer consists of a room within a shared house with 24-hour staff onsite. This is accessed through contacting Childrens Commissioning at artreferrals@bcpcouncil.gov.uk
* **Bed and Breakfast (B&B) Accommodation** - is a private establishment that offers overnight accommodation and breakfast. Housing Options & Partnerships have arrangements in place with several providers and provide some security and support to ensure the safety and welfare of applicants that are placed in this accommodation. Housing will provide a Resettlement Officer to work with the care experienced young person whilst they are in this accommodation and CSC will provides a wrap-around support package like ‘Always There’. As bed and breakfast is to be viewed as a last resort, any proposed emergency accommodation placement must be submitted with confirmation of the support that will be provided for authorisation by the Director of

Housing and the Director of Corporate Parenting Service before it can be allocated. 16 and 17 year olds presenting as homeless will not be accommodated in B&B provision.

**Governance Arrangements**

The following governance arrangements shall oversee this document under the area of care experienced young people.

