**BCP Young Person Homelessness Screening Tool for Professionals**

The purpose of this guidance is to support a conversation with a young person about their homelessness or threat of homelessness, to aide a discussion with the young person and identify any risk indicators.

The priority should be to help the young person to remain at or return home whenever this is a safe and sustainable option.

If a young person is not deemed as homeless but is refusing to return home, Early Help Youth Services can explore options with the young person for an alternative safe arrangement.

A young person may feel uncomfortable talking about their situation due to their circumstances, experience, or trauma. It is important to acknowledge the impact of uncertainty upon young people facing homelessness.

When a young person discloses to you that they are at risk of homelessness, establish:

* Have they spoken to anyone about their housing situation?

**If Yes:** establish who. If it is Early Help, Children’s Social Care or the Housing Department, if the young person knows who they have spoken to, contact the named person. If they don’t know, the MASH team can be contacted on 01202 123334 or the Housing Team can be contacted on 01202 123147.

**If No:**

* Where have they been living?
* Why are they unable to return there?

NB: If the young person is unable to remain at home because the person who has been caring for them is unable to provide them with suitable accommodation and care, a referral should be made to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). Any professional who is working with a 16- or 17-year-olds who discloses that they are homeless or at risk of homelessness should also follow this process.  Referrals from professionals must be made using the [MASH Inter Agency Referral form](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fpdscp.co.uk%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2023%2F02%2FBCP-IAR-final-version-Feb-2023.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK).

If the concerns are raised outside of normal working hours the Out of Hours Service should be contacted on 01202 738 256

* Who has asked them to leave home? (Consider whether this person has parental responsibility. Is there anybody else that has parental responsibility?)
* When were they asked to leave home?
* Why have they been asked to leave their home?
* How long has this been going on?
* Do they have any friends or relatives they can stay with?
* Is there anyone we cannot talk to about their housing situation?

NB: Why? Is a referral to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) required? Remember not to ask top many questions if they disclose a risk of harm to themselves as this is for the role of a professional completing a safeguarding assessment.

* Is there anyone else in the home that they have a good relationship with? Or equally don’t have a good relationship with?

**What if the child has a home but is refusing to return?**

Why are they refusing?

Take their views and gather their reasons why. Assess immediate risk and have a conversation with the MASH team to seek advice and guidance before responding to the young person.

**Would the Young Person benefit from a referral to Early Help?**

Early Help Targeted Family Support Workers and Adolescent Support Workers will work alongside other professionals and organisations to work together using a multiagency approach to support young people to achieve better outcomes.

The teams, based in and around the Early Help Family Hubs and Youth Access Points, will assess and create a plan to identify, critical family worries and needs. Where appropriate, workers will act as Lead Professional, working alongside the family and young person to build resilience and improve outcomes for the children and young people.

Contact details for Early Help First Response Team are 01202 735046 or childrensfirstresponse@bcpcouncil.gov.uk

**Consider and plan any additional support package for the young person**

Possible topics for exploration may include:

Pregnancy & sexual health

Risk of Childhood Exploitation

Relationship breakdown

Concerns around substance misuse

Young person requires support with education, employment or training

Young person’s mental or physical health needs

Young person is negatively affected by family dynamics

Young person is exposed to / at risk of criminality

Young person has been affected by domestic abuse

Young person requires financial support

**Preparing the young person for an assessment with Childrens Social Care or Housing where there is no alternative option.**

In most circumstances, the interests of young people are best served by living with their parents or wider family or moving on to independent living in a planned way. The initial priority for both Children’s Services and Housing will be to identify whether a young person who approaches the authority for assistance because they are homeless or threatened with homelessness, can safely return to their parental home.

It is important to inform the young person about their rights and entitlements so that they can understand their options and make an informed choice about what they would like to do, so that they can be more aware of their options in advance of the joint assessment.

Offer them access to advocacy services to support them with this process and explain what an advocate is and what they do.

Talk to the young person about the different packages of support and accommodation available to them, both before and after they turn 18, either through being “looked after” by Children’s Social Care or by accepting an offer of accommodation from the Housing Department. Refer to the Your Housing Options and Choices Leaflet (Appendix H) to guide conversations and for further information on the options available and advocacy support.

Once you have had a conversation with the young person and they are informed of their rights and entitlements, establish which department the young person would like to initially approach for assistance and contact them via MASH team on 01202 123334 or the Housing Team on 01202 123147.

Following this, where homelessness is confirmed, the receiving department will arrange a joint assessment within 5 working days.

Approaching either Children’s Services or the Housing Department to discuss the young persons circumstances can be very intimidating for the young person with a high level of uncertainty. Professionals should take a trauma informed approach and ensure that the experiences of the young person are repeated as little as possible. The assessment should be a thorough assessment and prior to this the young person should be prepared that they may be asked intrusive questions that they may not understand the relevance of. By preparing the young person in advance of the assessment and by providing them with as much information in advance to make an informed decision, should minimise the trauma of the situation.