

WANDSWORTH COUNCIL: HOUSING POLICY & PROCEDURES

Homelessness – 16/17 Year Olds Approaching as Homeless

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Glossary:

B&B – Bed and Breakfast
 CSD – Children’s Services Department
 HRA – Homelessness Reduction Act
 HRD – Housing and Regeneration Department
 MASH – Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
 PHP – Personalised Housing Plan
 R&A – Referral and Assessment
 TA – Temporary Accommodation
 YOT – Youth Offending Team

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Edge of Care team in Children’s Services undertakes intensive targeted support, in line with the Outstanding Practice Framework, to ensure that young people can remain living within their birth family wherever possible. This team works closely with the Brief Intervention Service to provide targeted support to 16- and 17-year-olds at risk of homelessness. The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017 places a focus on the proactive prevention of homelessness and accompanying guidance emphasises the importance of joint working between Housing and Children’s Services.
- 1.2 The [‘Prevention of homelessness and provision of accommodation for 16 and 17 year old young people who may be homeless and/or require accommodation’](#) produced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Department for Education provides guidance to children’s services authorities and housing authorities on their duties under Part 3 of the Children Act 1989 and Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and HRA 2017) to secure or provide accommodation for homeless 16 and 17 year old young people. This procedure outlines how Wandsworth’s Housing and Regeneration Department (HRD) and Children’s Services will work together to support this vulnerable group.



2.0 What we do when a 16- or 17-year-old young person presents as homeless

- 2.1 If a 16/17-year-old young person presents to Children’s Services or the HRD as homeless, they will be directed to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH - tel. 020 8871 6622) at the Town Hall Extension. The young person will be seen, on the same day, by a social worker and an Edge of Care practitioner. They will work with the young person and talk to their family to understand the young person’s immediate needs.
- 2.2 At this point the social worker will commence a children and family assessment (Southwark Judgement), to determine whether a duty is owed under section 17 or 20 of the Children Act, 1989.
- 2.3 After initial conversations, the social worker may find that the young person is not homeless. After visiting the parents/carers of the young person, it might be clear that the young person can return home. This being the case the focus will shift to supporting the young person and their family with a return home, involving services such as Edge of Care and Family Therapy.

- 2.4 If the social worker finds that the young person is homeless or at risk of homelessness a discussion should be held with the Deputy Director to discuss the young persons situation and Section 20 accommodation.
- 2.5 The options discussed with the young person will include mediation between the parents/carers and the young person, the provision of a safe place to stay whilst the assessment is undertaken, and any other housing options that may be relevant. If there is no alternative accommodation available within the young person's family and friends' network during the assessment period, the HRD will provide temporary accommodation to the young person until a decision within the Southwark Judgement assessment has been made. During this period the Homeless Prevention and Solutions Officer will continue to explore viable alternative housing options, including mediation under the relief duty.
- 2.6 If a duty is owed under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989, then Children's Services will be responsible for accommodating the young person as a Child Looked After. The young person will be placed in accommodation that meets their needs by Children's Services, and will be allocated a social worker, and a practitioner from the Edge of Care team, if appropriate. It will be clearly explained to the young person their right to choose not to become 'looked after' and the options available to them should they decide they do not want that. This information will be provided in writing.
- 2.7 If a duty is owed under [Section 17 of the Children Act 1989](#) a Homeless Prevention and Solutions officer (under the homelessness legislation) and the social worker will continue to work jointly to assess the needs of the young person.
- 2.8 The above actions also apply to 16/17-year olds who are parents and/or pregnant.



3.0 Young people leaving custody

- 3.1 When a young person is in custody, as part of the custodial period, the young person will receive three monthly planning and review meetings from the Youth Justice Service (YJS). Resettlement planning will begin at the start of the young person's sentence and continue throughout the young person's time in custody. If at any point it is identified that the young person may require accommodation on release, agencies should collaborate to ensure that suitable accommodation and support is arranged in good time.
- 3.2 Where a young person is known to the YJS and there is a risk of homelessness upon their release, it will be the responsibility of the YJS practitioner to notify the MASH team. The young person will be seen by a social worker and a practitioner from the Edge of Care team. Where the young person is at risk of homelessness, services (YJS, Children's Services and HRD) will work together to ensure that the young person can live with their birth family, carers or family network, or another appropriate adult, when they leave custody, through the provision of family mediation, family meetings, family group conferences or any other family support.
- 3.3 If the joint assessments determine the young person to be homeless on the day, then they will be offered the most appropriate accommodation that is available at the time. The accommodation must be suitable.

NOTE: Bed and Breakfast accommodation, including hotels and nightly let accommodation with shared facilities, is not considered suitable for any 16 or 17-year-old. Young people should not be placed in all-ages night shelter provision, even in an emergency.

The [guidance on prevention of homelessness and provision of accommodation for 16 and 17 year old young people who may be homeless and/or require accommodation](#) sets out what is and is not suitable accommodation for this age group.

- 3.4 If a duty is owed under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989, then Children's Services will be responsible for accommodating the young person as a Child Looked After. The young person will be placed in accommodation that meets their needs by Children's Services, and will be allocated a social worker, and a practitioner from the Edge of Care team, if appropriate. It will be clearly explained to the young person their right to choose not to become 'looked after' and the options available to them should they decide they do not want that. This information will be provided in writing.
- 3.5 If a duty is owed under [Section 17 of the Children Act 1989](#) a Homeless Prevention and Solutions officer (under the homelessness legislation) and the social worker will continue to work jointly to assess the needs of the young person.



4.0 Allocation of Temporary Accommodation (\$17 only)

- 4.1 Where the most appropriate option based on need and a young person's wishes and feelings is deemed to be allocation of Temporary Accommodation (TA), all relevant information about a young person (including referral forms and documents) will be passed via Civica W2 to the Temporary Accommodation (TA) team to book the young person into TA. The young person will be given a letter that will inform them of where the TA is and other relevant information. The young person will be supported to their accommodation by a social worker or Edge of Care practitioner.
- 4.2 The young person will then be referred to the Housing Services Operations team. This team will go through finance related issues with the young person including going through housing benefit forms and other important information.
- 4.3 The HRD is aware that the 16- and 17-Year [Homelessness Code of Guidance](#) (April 2018) states that accommodation must be suitable for the applicant. In particular, point 17.40 states "B&B accommodation is not suitable for 16 and 17 year old applicants even on an emergency basis."

In most circumstances Housing will aim to move young people into supported accommodation where possible and where not possible a self-contained unit, with floating support services will be provided.



5.0 Decision Made on Homelessness (\$17 only)

- 5.1 The Homeless Prevention and Solutions Officer will carry out their assessment having due regard to the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the HRA 2017). Housing will carry out an assessment, which will include a Personalised Housing Plan (PHP). The case worker will continue to work jointly with Children's Services and with the young person and their family, with a view to return the young person to their family home, wherever possible.

Following completion of enquiries, if the young person's case is accepted under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended in 2002 Act), they will be informed by a decision letter that will be sent to them by the caseworker dealing with their application.

- 5.2 An offer of settled accommodation will be made when it is deemed that the young person is ready and able to live independently*. An offer will not be made until the young person has turned 18. All new council tenants aged 20 or under will automatically be offered tenancy support to help to maintain their tenancy.

* The supported provider will support and monitor the progress of the young person and inform the Temporary Accommodation team when the client is ready for move on.

- 5.3 Following the completion of enquiries, it may be found that the Council does not have a duty to house the young person under homelessness legislation. Any such negative decision will be notified to the young person by a decision letter from the Homeless Prevention and Solutions Officer. The Edge of Care Team and the allocated social worker will be notified of the decision. The decision letter will also inform the young person of their right to review/appeal the decision.
- 5.4 The main reasons why housing would not have a duty towards a young person would be if they were ineligible, intentionally homeless or not homeless, otherwise priority need would be automatic for 16/17 year olds.



6.0 Contact Details

6.1 Children's Services:

- Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) 020 8871 6622 (9am to 5pm).
- **Out of Office Service call** 020 8871 6000.

MASH to be contacted when a 16/17-year-old presents at the HRD as homeless.

6.2 Homeless Prevention and Solutions:

Tel. 020 8871 6161 (9am to 5pm)

Out of hours call 020 8871 6000.

E-mail. Housingapplications@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk

To be contacted to undertake an assessment under the homelessness legislation (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002 and Homeless Reduction Act 2017) to find out whether the young person is homeless and eligible for assistance.

6.3 Wandsworth Youth Service:

Tel. 020 8871 7553

Email: youth@wandsworth.gov.uk

Website: http://youth.wandsworth.gov.uk/youth/info/29/useful_information

To be contacted if it is felt that the young person would benefit from additional advice on a number of issues ranging from Careers, Learning, Health, Housing, Work, Money, etc.



Letters:	Forms:	Other Information:
		LB Wandsworth Joint Protocol for 16/17-year-olds
		CSD and HRD Joint Working Protocol
		Safeguarding Children Procedure

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