

ADVICE FOR 16- & 17- YEAR OLDS WHO ARE HOMELESS

Are you 16/17 years old
and either Homeless or
about to be Homeless?



Facing the possibility of having nowhere to live or having to leave home suddenly can be a very stressful and confusing time. It is important you receive the right support and advice, so you fully understand your options and you can make the right decisions.

1. Here to help...

If you are homeless, 'sofa surfing' or feel you can no longer stay at home, it is important you speak to someone and tell them your situation as soon as possible.

- If you already have a worker supporting you, such as a Social Worker or Early Help
- Worker you should talk to them straight away.

- If you do not have anyone supporting you then it is important you contact the
- **Wandsworth Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)**

- **Wandsworth MASH** is the contact point for all young people who find themselves homeless or at risk of homelessness, and is based at Wandsworth Town Hall Extension, Wandsworth High Street, SW18 2PT.

- Someone you know and trust can make a referral, or you can make a referral yourself, in person or online.
https://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/make_a_referral_to_the_multi_agency_safeguarding_hub

- If you are homeless with nowhere immediate to go, you will be seen on the same day, by a social worker and Edge of Care worker to begin an assessment of your situation and needs.

2. What happens next?

A social worker, together with an Edge of Care worker will ask you some questions to make an assessment about your circumstances. They will make contact and meet with your parents, carers and where possible, your extended family. They will also offer you access to an independent advocate to help you understand your rights and tell us what you think.

- The social worker will ask you about what has happened to make you homeless. They will try to establish whether there is anything they can do to help you return home safely.

- There may be some things that are difficult for you to talk about, but it is really important you tell us as much information as possible to help us understand your situation.

- If you are not able to return home and your extended family or friends are unable to help, then we will make sure you have a safe place to stay under Section 20 of the Children's Act 1989. This means you would become 'looked after' and under the care of the Local Authority, while the assessment is being completed.

- While the assessment is taking place you might live with a foster family or in semi-independent accommodation, depending on your needs. Your social worker and Edge of Care worker will continue to engage you and your family to understand what support you and your family would find helpful to enable a safe return home.
- The assessment we do will help us understand other things about you, like whether you are able to cook and care for yourself and manage your money. It helps us understand what other support you might need, as you approach adulthood.

3. Possible outcomes after you have been assessed.

- We may decide with you that you can return home to your family. We will work with you and your family to support your return home.
- As part of this process, your Social Worker may undertake mediation work between you and your family to determine if you can return home safely. We may agree together that you go and stay with relatives or other responsible adults in your life where this is safe to do so.
- We may recommend that you need to be provided with accommodation by Children's Services and be looked after by the local authority under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 (see point 4).
- If you don't think you need to be looked after you may be able to apply to the council's housing department for accommodation. The social worker will need to agree that this is a safe decision. You may be supported under a Child in Need Plan if you decide you want accommodation through the council's housing department.

4. If you are considered homeless and decide or are assessed as needing to be in care or 'looked after'

- The type of accommodation and support you will be offered will depend on your needs. Your wishes and feelings will be taken into account in deciding what accommodation is best for you. For example, it may be a foster family, a residential home, or semi-independent accommodation. We will keep working with you and your family to assist you in returning home, where it is safe to do so.
- If you stay in our care you will have a pathway plan that sets out what help you may need to achieve your longer term life goals. You will have regular visits from a social worker and support from a Leaving Care Personal Advisor.

- You will have regular reviews of your progress until you reach 18. The reviews will look at your progress in key areas of your life, such as your education, health, identity, finances and your relationship with your family.
- Your plan will be reviewed by an Independent Reviewing Officer. The Independent Reviewing Officer will check that the council is looking after you and listening to what you have to say.
- Your right to support once you turn 18 will depend on how long you are in care, however we will ensure you are supported to plan your move into adult life and that there is not a sudden end to our involvement. For further information, our Leaving Care Offer can be found here.
<https://wandsworth.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/children-and-families/future-first/future-first-local-offer/>

5. If you are considered homeless and decline to be accommodated as a Child Looked After.

If you decline to be accommodated as a Child Looked After you will be offered accommodation by the Housing Department under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996.

What this means....

- You will continue to have an allocated social worker and may be considered a child in need under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.
- Your social worker will support you to make a homeless application to the Housing department.
- The Housing department will provide you with accommodation that meets your needs and prevents you from being homeless. This may be temporary accommodation initially, until you are settled in supported housing.
- Supported housing means that accommodation is provided alongside key work support, to help you live as independently as possible in the community.
- You will be allocated a support worker who, together with your social worker, will help you with money, budgeting, application for benefits, education, training, employment, accessing health services and learning to live independently in the community. They will support you in temporary accommodation until you move into supported accommodation.
- The Housing department, your social worker and your key worker will work with you to assess and identify your support and accommodation needs and

develop a personalised housing plan. It is important you engage with this to ensure you are provided with the right support to manage your tenancy.

- You will sign a tenancy agreement with your landlord and you will be responsible for paying your own rent and living costs.
- You can change your mind and opt to become a child looked after any time before your 18th birthday. Your social worker and independent advocate will continue to revisit this with you.

If you need more help understanding your options, please speak with an adult you trust and contact one of the independent advocacy or advisory services below:

<p>The Advocacy People 0330 440 9000 Email: info@theadvocacypeople.org.uk Website www.theadvocacypeople.org.uk</p>	<p>Shelter 0808 800 4444 (UK) www.shelter.org.uk</p>
<p>CAB www.citizensadvice.org.uk</p>	<p>Just for Kids Law 020 3174 2279 www.justforkidslaw.org</p>
<p>No Second Night Out 0870 383 3333 www.nosecondnightout.org.uk</p>	<p>Runaway Helpline www.runawayhelpline.org.uk This is a national, 24-hour free helpline for anyone aged 17 or under who has run away or been forced to leave home.</p>
<p>London Youth Gateway Get Help - Advice for boroughs — London Youth Gateway</p>	

Please sign below to confirm that you fully understand the information provided:

Name

Date
