



Joint Protocol –Meeting the needs of Homeless 16/17 year olds.

A partnership response

November 2023

Agreed By

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1. Introduction

Young people who become homeless in their adolescence are more likely to experience severe and multiple disadvantage such as poverty, substance misuse issues and mental health problems, trauma, social isolation and victims of violence and exploitation.

In simple terms, if you experience homelessness when you are young, you are much more likely to experience long-term homelessness as an adult. Overcrowding, unemployment, family violence, financial difficulties and illness of a family member were identified by young people as key factors contributing to relationship tensions and eventual family breakdown. They need support before, rather than after, their families have reached crisis point. If we do not provide support when it is first needed, at-risk young people can end up becoming homeless. At Wirral Council we are committed to addressing these inequalities by establishing a joint Social Care and Housing offer for those young people who require statutory interventions and support to prevent homelessness. In doing so we will apply a trauma informed approach.

Our Overall aim is to:

- ❖ Ensuring those at risk get the right assistance as soon as they need it.
- ❖ Support to access and maintain education, training, and employment.
- ❖ Build a trusting relationship to allow the young people to explore their housing options and make informed decisions.
- ❖ Giving young people good, clear information about what help is out there and how to access it.
- ❖ Support to access safe, stable, and affordable accommodation.
- ❖ Support to maintain connection to family.
- ❖ Support to stay connected with their communities and support networks.
- ❖ Assistance to recognise the concept of interdependence with others (as opposed to independence)
- ❖ Recognise different needs for different ages and stages of adolescent development.
- ❖ Ensure their trauma is recognised and that support is respectful and responsive to the needs of young people.

2. Legislative Framework – Promoting Cooperation

In April 2009 Guidance was issued jointly by the Secretary of State for Education and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government following the judgment by the House of Lords in the case of R (G) v London Borough of Southwark. It was revised in 2018 to reflect changes in homelessness and children's legislation. The guidance sets out the respective duties of children's services and housing services to secure or provide accommodation for 16 and 17 year old children who are homeless or in need of accommodation.

Case law held that where a 16 or 17 year old is owed duties under section 20 of the 1989 Act, this takes precedence over the duties in the 1996 Housing Act (as amended) in providing for children in need who require accommodation. Where the specific duty is owed under section 20 of the 1989 Act, a 16 or 17 year old should be accommodated under that provision rather than looking to the general duty owed to children in need and their families under section 17 of the 1989 Act. Housing services also have duties towards young people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. It is therefore essential that children's services and housing services work together to plan and provide services that are centred on young people and their families.

Duties owed by each service will depend on a range of factors, including:

- ❖ which service they initially seek help from.
- ❖ the outcomes of any assessments and enquiries
- ❖ Establishing if they are an eligible, relevant, or qualified child (Appendix 6)
- ❖ and the wishes and feelings of the young person and their family.

For further information please see MHCLG guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/provision-of-accommodation-for-16-and-17-year-olds-who-may-be-homeless-and-or-require-accommodation>

3. A Joint Protocol – a partnership approach

This Protocol sets out how Wirral Council's Childrens and Young Persons services will work in partnership with Homelessness and Supported Housing services to deliver an integrated approach to meeting the needs of 16/17 Year olds.

Commissioning partners and housing providers also have a role to play in ensuring that young people are safe and have their needs met with appropriate accommodation. This protocol will set out how the assessment of a homeless 16/17 year old will be conducted jointly including the operational process to ensure that cases are dealt with promptly and effectively where the focus on the child's safety and welfare is paramount.

An integrated approach has several benefits:

- ❖ **improvement of joint working and information sharing through enhanced communication between children's and housing services.**
- ❖ **enabling a joint approach to assessment.**
- ❖ **a focus on preventing or relieving homelessness and a co-ordinated authority response.**
- ❖ **giving 16 and 17 year olds, and their families, access to information about support services and, if necessary, accommodation options available.**
- ❖ **Child focused, co-ordinated multi-agency planning and support to ensure that young people do not have to repeat their stories or risk being passed between services.**

The Joint Protocol will set out:

- **a mutually agreed vision and objectives.**
- **outline the duties placed on both children's services and homelessness services apply to all 16 and 17 year olds, including those who are pregnant, have children themselves, have an older partner, or are in or leaving custody.**
- **how the joint assessment and interventions for homeless 16/17-year olds will be conducted.**
- **Set agreed timescales joint assessment completion to determine appropriate support, advice, and assistance to 16/17 year olds.**
- **Interventions to ensure effective action to prevent youth homelessness through a safe return to a family home or to suitable friends.**
- **How young people will be supported to make informed decisions regarding their options.**
- **A promise that every effort will be made to understand the young person's lived experience,**
- **An assurance that young people will be heard, and their wishes and feelings will inform the assessment outcome.**
- **To ensure homeless 16 or 17 year olds have accommodation and support services which meets their needs, holistically throughout their transition to adulthood.**

4. Keeping families together

In Wirral, we consider it will be in the best interests of most young people to live in the family home, when this is safe and appropriate to do so, or with responsible adults in their wider family and friends' network. When a 16 or 17 year old seeks support because they are homeless or threatened with homelessness, we will work with young people and their families to identify and resolve the issues which have led to the homeless crisis.

It may be possible to prevent a 16 or 17 year old from having to leave home, or it may take time to work through family tensions and problems. Our services will support families throughout the processes of assessment. Prevention work will not delay the provision of accommodation, if a duty is owed, and will be undertaken jointly by children's services and housing services to prevent a young person from becoming homeless under both section 17 of the 1989 Children's Act and section 195 of the 1996 Housing Act (as amended).

Our approach includes:

- Mediation and restorative intervention with the family to explore ways for the young person to return home either permanently or for a brief period to enable a planned move to accommodation.
- Facilitate a written behaviour agreements between the young person and family to address behaviour which has led to the threat of homelessness.
- Ongoing joint working between Housing services and Children's social services to support vulnerable families and young people threatened with or homeless.
- Explore whether there are any wider family members may be able to offer the young person a home.
- Advice and information on alternative pathways to access independent or supported accommodation.
- Provision of independent Advocacy service could be offered to the young person as an independent source of advice and support.
- Collaborating with specialist services to address the identified support needs of the young person or family members.
- Parenting advice/support by a Family support worker or through attending a Parenting programme.
- Respite care to allow a 'time-out' period to help diffuse the crisis and reduce the chance of recurrence.
- Access to specialist support if there are substance misuse concerns or gang-related issues.
- Every effort to ensure they are in education, training, or work opportunities.

5. Eligibility and referrals

Wirral Council joint protocol has an open referral route for any young person who is homeless or threatened with homelessness. A young person can approach Housing Options or Childrens social services directly for assistance or be referred by agencies supporting them, which may include schools, colleges, and specialist young person’s services. It should be noted that there is now a legal requirement for some public bodies under ‘Duty to Refer’ to make appropriate consensual referrals to homeless services for any persons considered homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Those young people are likely to be referred when:

- They have already left or been excluded from the family home.
- The home environment is not safe for the young person and places them at risk of harm or vulnerable to poor outcomes.
- Their behaviour is putting them or others at risk and carers are not able to manage those behaviours.
- A young person due to be released from Youth Offending Institute and requires accommodation.

Emergency Accommodation

Where a 16 or 17 year old seeks help or is referred, and it appears that they have nowhere safe to stay that night, then we must secure suitable emergency accommodation for them under section 20 of the 1989 Act, whilst their needs, including their need for continuing accommodation and support, are further assessed jointly between housing and children social services. The provision of emergency accommodation should not be delayed pending assessment.

There are only two circumstances in which Wirral Council might find that a young person should not be accommodated under Section 20 and may instead be owed duties under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).

This is where the young person is:

- **Not a child in need**
- **A 16 or 17 year old child in need who has capacity to make the decision, having been fully advised of the implications, has decided to decline accommodation offered under Section 20.**

Homeless young people who are **unaccompanied asylum seekers** and other **non-UK nationals** who are not eligible for ‘assistance’ under the homelessness legislation must be provided with accommodation and support by Childrens social services and will not require a referral to housing services.

6. Joint Assessment process

The Joint Assessment must be completed on all young people who present as Homeless. In all circumstances a referral must be made to Children's Social Cares Integrated Front Door Team for initial contact with the young person to determine their housing situation. Where a return home cannot be facilitated, the relevant duty team will consult with the Housing Options service to arrange a joint assessment.

Whilst the assessment will be jointly undertaken by a Social Care Worker and a Homeless Assessment and Prevention Officer, the Social Care Worker will take the lead in determining whether the need for accommodation is to be met under Section 20 using the following criteria:

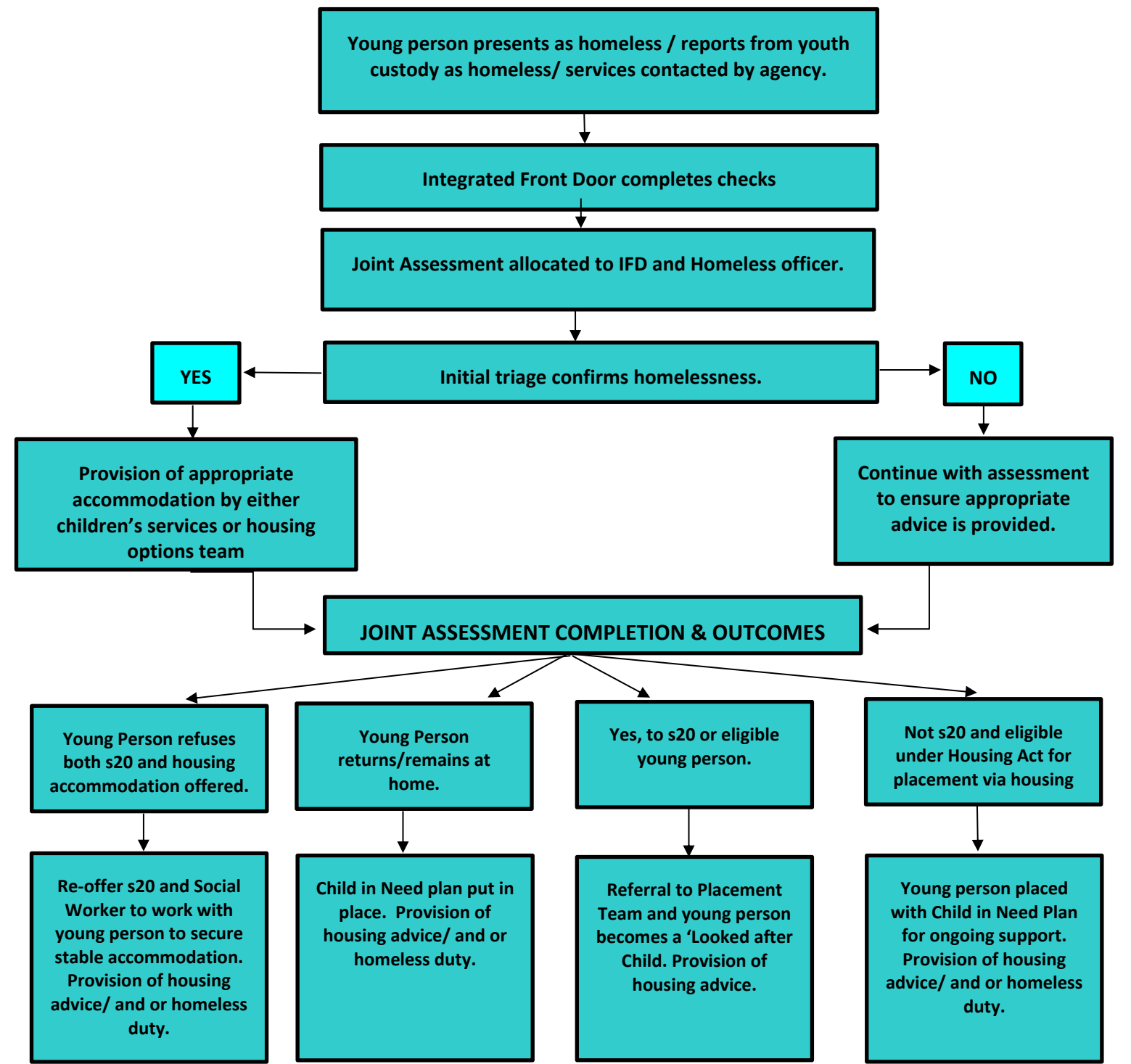
- No one has Parental Responsibility for the young person.
- The young person is lost or abandoned.
- The person who has been caring for the young person is unable to provide suitable care and accommodation; or
- It is considered that the child's welfare would be seriously threatened if accommodation were not provided.
- A 16 or 17 year old not willing to live with parents is not sufficient on its own to warrant homelessness, but incompatibility and a breakdown in the relationship between parent and young person would require further intervention.

Outside of Office Hours

Any young person requiring immediate homelessness assistance outside of normal office hours will be helped initially by Wirral's Emergency Duty Team. The Emergency Duty Team will commence an assessment and complete appropriate screening to check if the young person is known to children's services, and if not, will create a record of the contact. Immediate notification will be sent to both children's and housing services for allocation for a Joint Assessment in office hours.

Where immediate emergency accommodation is deemed necessary, the Emergency Duty Team will Assess presenting needs and consider if Emergency Foster Care provision is appropriate or to place into designated housing services commissioned emergency supported accommodation pending joint assessment completion. EDT will alert housing via generic email and reassign to IFD or allocated Social Care worker. The Joint Assessment outcome will determine appropriate long-term accommodation and support.

Referral Pathway



6a. Role of the Social Care Worker

Statutory guidance set out in *Working Together to Safeguard Children* outlines principles for assessing children under the Childrens Act 1989.

Social Care will lead the joint assessment which should:

- Be outcome focussed and timely with SMART planning.
- Be child-centred, understanding their lived experience, strengths, and difficulties.
- Have a detailed genogram identifying all significant people in the young person’s life.
- Understand the family history of and previous contact with Children’ services and Housing.
- Be informed by purposeful direct work to ensure the wishes and feelings of are properly understood and their views considered.
- Interview and maintain contact with the adults who retain parental responsibility for the young person and with any other family members.
- Undertake a visit to the family home or other accommodation where the young person has been living.
- Involve the young person’s wider professional network e.g., school/ college, GP, in the process.
- Assess the young person’s emotional and behavioural development, and their ability to conduct daily living activities.

The social care worker will ensure that the young person is fully consulted, has their wishes determined, and understands the implications of being Looked After (s20) or accommodated under the Housing Act.

This will include:

- ❖ **Full information about the package of support provided as a Looked After Child (s20)**
- ❖ **Accurate information about assistance that may be available from housing services under Part 7 Housing Act 1996 (if not s20)**
- ❖ **Provision of information for the young person to take away and consider.**
- ❖ **Advise and support young people to access independent advocacy services to assist the young person to make a considered decision about their options.**
- ❖ **If there is any doubt about a young person’s capacity to make a best interest decision, further discussion with relevant professionals, the young person and their family will determine an agreement as to how to proceed.**
- ❖ **Careful recording of how services have attempted to engage with the young person to assess their needs to determine and provide appropriate services.**

6b. Role of the Homeless Assessment and Prevention Officer

Children’s services will lead the assessment; however, the Homeless Assessment and Prevention Officer (HAPO) should treat the assessment as an application for assistance under Part 7 Housing Act 1996 (as amended). The officer must make enquiries to determine what, if any, duties are owed to the applicant.

- During the assessment the Homeless Assessment and Prevention Officer will:**
- ❖ **Assess the applicants’ circumstances and needs to determine homelessness and take reasonable steps to try and prevent or relieve the homelessness.**
 - ❖ **Provide appropriate housing advice and assistance.**
 - ❖ **Assist in ensuring the young person understands options available to them, particularly if they decide not to be accommodated under s20.**
 - ❖ **Award a relevant duty (if appropriate) in line with the Housing Act 1996 (as amended)**
 - ❖ **Develop a personalised housing plan.**
 - ❖ **Work alongside the Social Worker for the young person to meet their ongoing housing needs.**

The process for the officer is the same as any homeless assessment (regardless of age of applicant) in line with the Housing Act 1996, however officers must be mindful that the applicant is a child and engagement is proportional to the applicant’s age.

Awarding a homeless duty

The Homeless Assessment and Prevention Officer will consider awarding an initial ‘homeless prevention’ or ‘relief duty’ in line with the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). The guidance here remains the same as that stipulated in the Homeless Code of Guidance.

Personalised Housing Plans

A Personalised Housing Plan will be developed between the Homeless Assessment and Prevention Officer and the young person to identify appropriate actions to prevent or relieve the young person’s homelessness. Actions should be proportionate to the young person’s age, understanding and assessed capability to undertake the actions. Other relevant people, such as social workers or guardians, may also be requested to take actions as appropriate. Plans are kept under review for the duration of the young person’s case to reflect changing circumstances or needs.

Priority Need

The Homeless Assessment and Prevention Officer will not be able to determine priority need until a social care assessment has been completed. It is likely that the young person will have priority need for assistance if they are not owed an accommodation duty or does not wish to be accommodated. under s20. A 'Child in Need' Assessment must be completed and shared with the Homeless Assessment and Prevention Officer within 45 days.

Intentionally Homeless

For an applicant to be considered 'intentionally homeless' the actions or omissions that led to them becoming homeless must be deliberate. Officers should be mindful that a 16 or 17 year old might not have the ability or understanding of the full consequences of their actions when compared to adult applicants.

Ending the Prevention and Relief Duties

Ending a homeless duty to a young person, as with those age 18 years and older, is set out in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and the Homeless Code of Guidance. Duties can only be ended when:

1. The young person is no longer eligible for assistance.
2. The officer is satisfied that the young person has suitable accommodation available for them to occupy for at least six months.
3. The young person refuses a final offer of suitable accommodation.
4. The young person becomes homeless intentionally from any accommodation that has been made available to them (including emergency, temporary accommodation).
5. The young person has deliberately and unreasonably refused to co-operate.
6. The officer awards a further duty (relief duty or main housing duty) to the young person.

Housing Options officers will consult with the nominated Social Worker for the young person if a homeless duty is ended adversely (as shown in numbers 3-5 above). The Social Worker would be required to conduct a further assessment of the young person's needs.

7. Joint Assessment Outcomes

Scenario One – Young Person is assessed as ‘not homeless’.

If the joint assessment concludes that the young person is ‘not homeless’ and has safe, appropriate accommodation to occupy for at least six months; consideration will be given by Childrens services as to whether services should be provided as a ‘Child in Need’ under Section 17 of the 1989 Act. In such cases the young person will continue to have an allocated social worker who will implement support and interventions to help tackle the issues that have led to a risk of homelessness. When a ‘Child in Need’ plan is not considered appropriate the case will be supported by Early Help or Community lead services.

The Homeless Assessment and Prevention Officer will provide suitable advice and assistance and issue a ‘Not Homeless’ decision in line with homeless legislation.

Scenario Two – Young Person is assessed as Section 20 or eligible young person.

In cases where a young person is assessed, and agrees, that it is in their best interests to be, ‘Looked after by the Local Authority’ then a referral must be placed by the Social Worker to the Childrens Services Placement Team. In almost all circumstances a homeless 16 or 17 year old would be a child in need owed a duty under s20 of the Childrens Act 1989.

Placement options, in accordance with the young person’s needs, may include:

- Independent Fostering agency placements
- In house foster placements
- Residential children’s home
- Supported Living accommodation.
- Supported Lodgings

Whilst a young person is accommodated under s20 they are not entitled to welfare benefits for housing or living costs. Childrens services has a duty to provide financially for the young person and to meet their assessed needs.

Scenario Three- Young Person is not assessed as s20 however is eligible under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended)

Accommodation should only be provided under the Housing Act if the young person does not meet the criteria for s20 or has declined accommodation offered under s20. The young person should be fully advised of the consequences of declining s20 accommodation during the assessment, and of the legal tests that their homeless application will be subject to, to determine any legal duties that may be awarded.

A 16 or 17 year old, who are not assessed as being s20, are recognised by homeless law to be in ‘priority need’. If a young person is awarded a ‘homeless duty’ then an offer of suitable, temporary accommodation will be made by housing services, whilst officers work with the young person to end

their homelessness. In parallel, the allocated Social Worker will conduct an assessment to identify any support requirements, under Section 17 of the Childrens Act. If appropriate the Social Worker will develop a 'Child in Need' Plan, implement a support package, and assist to claim eligible welfare benefits.

Suitable accommodation will be sourced by housing services and may include:

- Supported Lodgings
- Semi-independent specialist young person supported accommodation (including accommodation for pregnant young people or those with children)

It is important to note that accommodation provided will almost always be supported accommodation with 24/7 on site staffing support. There is limited access to independent social or private rented tenancies for those age below 18 years old.

Bed and Breakfast accommodation, including hotel and nightly let accommodation with shared facilities, is not considered suitable for any 16 or 17 year old

Scenario 4 – Young Person declines both s20 and Housing Act offer of accommodation.

In the instance, where the young person declines to be accommodated by either children's or housing services, the matter will default to the allocated Social Worker. Housing services are only required to make one offer of suitable interim, temporary accommodation which, if declined, ends the temporary accommodation duty under s188 of the 1996 Housing Act (as amended). Every effort will be made by all involved to collaborate with the young person to provide clear advice to end their homelessness.

It should be clear that in the case of housing services the young person may:

- Refuse an offer of interim, temporary accommodation however the young person's homeless relief or main housing duty will be ongoing until such a time as the duty is discharged.
- If the young person should decline a final offer of settled accommodation, intended to bring the relief or main duty to an end, then all legal homeless duties will be discharged.

A refusal of housing services temporary accommodation Further work should be undertaken to clearly advise the young person of the implications of their decision for their homelessness situation, and children's services will re-offer s20 accommodation.

Placement planning and Information exchange.

Regardless of the accommodation options chosen by the young person, it is expected that the Social Worker works with the respective housing provider to provide appropriate information about the young person, those roles of those involved in supporting them, and their support needs. The partnership between Social Worker and housing provider should be ongoing for the benefit of the young person. The Social Worker will visit the young person at their accommodation and assess on each visit whether it is safe and meeting their overall needs.

8. Transition to Adulthood

Young people who are accommodated under section 20 at ages 16 and 17 years will qualify for a LAC service until they are 18 years old. However, if they qualify as an eligible or relevant child (aged 16 or 17 years old who has been looked after by Wirral Council for more than 13 weeks between 14 to 17 years), or former relevant child, they will normally be entitled to a full leaving care service up to the age of 21 (or 25 if they request continuing support).

The young person will only cease to be entitled to a leaving care service if they have returned to live with their parent or someone with parental responsibility for a continuous period of at least 6 months and that relationship has not broken down.

Young people who are Looked After for less than 13 weeks prior to their 18th birthday will not be entitled to a leaving care service. However, they may be eligible for limited support from Wirral Council that will focus on providing support for their education, training, and employment.

The young person's allocated social worker is required to develop a transition plan, and work with housing services to ensure the young person has clear information about their housing options in advance of their 18th birthday.

Housing Services Supported accommodation pathway.

Young people who were not s20 and accessed accommodation under the Housing Act 1996, will have been primarily accommodated in housing service commissioned, young persons 'supported accommodation'. Housing providers work with young people via support plans to develop independent living skills and address support needs. Support plans are kept under regular review and housing providers will assess if the young person is to remain in their existing placement, or access appropriate 'move on' accommodation once the young person reaches 18 years old.

Move on accommodation options may include:

- Supported lodgings.
- Supported accommodation in specialist housing designated for 18-25 year olds (including pregnant young people or those with children)
- Private rented housing including shared housing i.e., House in Multiple Occupation
- Social housing

Young people accessing independent living would be referred to housing-related floating support services in addition to any children's social services assistance.

Appendix 1 – Joint Protocol Monitoring & Review

Compliance and Escalation

The protocol should be adhered to for all cases of young people approaching the Council, where a young person has an accommodation need. It is the responsibility of the individual Team Managers to ensure that staff within their service areas receive appropriate training and guidance to ensure they comply with the protocol. Front line staff should be aware it is everybody's responsibility to work together to implement this protocol for the benefit of the young people concerned. It is recognised that from time to time individual staff may not be able to resolve issues (i.e., expectations for assessments within timescales have not been met) and this may need to be escalated. In the first instance where resolution is required staff should contact: -

Head of Housing Services– Lisa Newman

Head of Service Children's Services – Lynn Campbell

Continued failure and breaches of the protocol will be formally escalated using the LSCB's escalation procedure.

Equality & Diversity

The Equality and Diversity policies of each organisation signed up to this protocol must underpin the way in which services are provided.

All organisations are expected to value diversity and be committed to equality of opportunity and access to suitable accommodation for all young people regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, culture, faith, or disability.

Monitoring review & development

This Protocol will be reviewed one year after the date it comes into effect. Organisations and services involved with this Protocol are asked to provide feedback and performance information that can be collated for the purpose of regular audit, and shared to improve services to inform and support collective commissioning intentions in Wirral.

Information will be collected on:

- Number of contacts to Housing Options
- Number of contacts to Children's Services
- Provision under Section 20 Children Act 1989
- Provision under Part 7 Housing Act 1996
- Current 16/17 years old awaiting suitable accommodation.

Appendix 2 – Information Sharing

All information provided by the young person is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties unless:

- the young person has given their consent to the information being shared.
- it is necessary to share the information to protect the young person or others from significant harm.
- under court order.
- there is a statutory power under the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 to share information with a relevant authority (police, local authority, or health authority) for the purposes of preventing crime.

By law, young people aged 16 and 17 are deemed capable of giving informed consent to information sharing and must consent unless they lack the mental capacity to make this decision. In these cases, the principles of the Mental Capacity Act should be followed; the allocated social worker will decide who should provide consent on their behalf. Normally this would be a parent or someone with parental responsibility. If this is not possible, guidance may have to be sought from the Courts.

It is lawful for agencies including the police to share information regarding young people who participate in gangs and offending to protect other young people within the pathway accommodation or to stop the commission of a crime.

Information gathered for the Children's Services assessment will be made available to Housing Services for the purposes of homelessness prevention, or to assist the assessment under the Housing Act 1996. Any such assessment will be undertaken alongside the Children's Services assessment to prevent the young person becoming homeless and to prevent unnecessary delays.

Young people in custody/Hospital/Other circumstances

The Youth Justice Service Children's Services, Health and Housing Options (where appropriate) should work together to ensure effective arrangements are in place to identify young people who are in custody, hospital or other circumstances who may be at risk of homeless on release.

The Youth Justice Service have a specific Key Performance Indicator that sets out timeframes that should be adhered to for arranging accommodation when a young person is due to be released. Agencies should work together to identify a bespoke re settlement plan which will include appropriate accommodation to ensure that any young person leaving custody is supported through the transition from custody to community. Children's Social Care should be included in the re settlement plan where the Youth Justice Service need support when a young person can not return home and alternative accommodation is required, this should be done in a timely manner following the KPI's set by the Ministry of Justice where possible.

Any young people who have been remanded under LASPO will be deemed as a Child Looked After, and as so will need to be if not already opened under social care. The same rules apply with regards to Child Looked After status when a young person is remanded under LASPO, the child will remain a CLA until the date they are sentenced to the offence in Court and as such dependant on the length of remand have access to a PA / Leaving care support.

Services should cooperate, to ensure that young people can live with parents or guardians or another appropriate adult when they leave custody or are discharged. The provision of family mediation, family group conferences or other family support services may be called upon to assist with the setting up of a Resettlement Plan.

Resettlement planning will begin at the start of a sentence or admission and continue throughout the young person's time away from their home. If at any point it is identified that the young person may require accommodation, agencies will need to collaborate to ensure that a suitable accommodation and support placement is arranged in good time.

Children's services will have a duty to accommodate young people who were looked after or were 'Relevant' children when they entered custody/hospital or have become a 'Relevant' child by virtue of having been remanded or detained in a hospital or secure steering care for 13 weeks or more, and require accommodation upon release.

A young person who is not already a looked after or Relevant child but may require accommodation, must have an assessment to determine what duties are owed under the 1989 Act, including whether Children's Services will have a duty to provide accommodation under section 20. In the event the young person does not already have an allocated Social Worker, a request for this should be sent to the Integrated Front Door (ifd@wirral.gov.uk 0151 606 2008, option 2).

Appendix 3 – Factors for consideration when assessing the needs of a homeless 16/17 year old.

Dimensions of need	Issues to consider in assessing a 16/17 year olds future needs
Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Does the young person have access to stable accommodation? ❖ Can the young person remain in their current accommodation until they reach 18 years old? ❖ Is the accommodation suitable?
Family and social relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Assess support networks. ❖ Regular contact with and relationships with their parents and wider family. ❖ The capacity of the young person's family and social network to provide stable accommodation that the child's needs. ❖ Is the young person involved in any religious or cultural groups or have they been ostracised by their cultural/ religious community?
Emotional and behavioural development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Assess self-esteem, resilience, and confidence. ❖ Assessment of their attachments and the quality of relationships. ❖ Does the child show self-control and appropriate self-awareness?
Education, training, and employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Information about the young person's education experience and background. ❖ Assess whether support may be required to enable the young person to access education, training, or employment.
Financial capability and independent living skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Assess the independence of the young person. ❖ Assessment of the young person's financial competence ❖ Determine how they will secure financial support in the future. ❖ Information about the support the young person might need to develop self-management and independent living skills.
Health and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Assessment of the young person's physical, emotional, and mental health needs ❖ Does the young person have any medical conditions or allergies? ❖ Does the young person take any medication, if yes, are they able to manage accessing their medication, repeat prescriptions etc. ❖ Is the young person registered with a GP, dentist, or Optician?
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Assessment of the young person's needs because of their ethnicity, preferred language, cultural background, religion, or sexual identity.
Additional Support Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Mental Health support ❖ Risk of Domestic Abuse/ grooming/ sexual violence/ gangs ❖ Offending ❖ Substance misuse/ dependency

Appendix 4 – Information about being accommodated.

S20 Childrens Act	Housing Act 1996
Young Person appointed a social worker who will assess their ongoing needs and develop a care plan.	The Homeless Assessment and Prevention Officer will provide housing advice, award a homeless duty, and develop a Personalised Housing Plan to take reasonable steps to assist the young person to secure or retain accommodation.
The Care Plan will identify what Wirral Council and other agencies will do to meet the young person's needs including accommodation, health, education, identity, and family relationships.	The young person will have a duty to cooperate and complete the actions set out in their Personalised Housing Plan.
The young person's accommodation is arranged and paid for by Childrens Services until they reach 18 years old.	The young person is responsible for claiming benefits and paying for their accommodation and daily living expenditure.
Young person will receive subsistence/ pocket money or special allowances for birthdays or other occasions from Childrens Services.	No subsistence/ pocket money/ special allowances from Childrens Services.
Once aged 16 years and accommodated for 13 weeks by Wirral Council, the young person will be appointed a Personal Advisor (PA). The PA will complete a needs assessment and a pathway plan implemented to assist the young person to transition to adulthood.	The young person will not be required to have social worker or PA or equivalent.
Young person can get support to resolve any complaints, or representations linked to an accommodation breakdown.	No entitlement to support to resolve complaint or issues linked to accommodation breakdown.
If the placement breaks down, Childrens Services must provide a new placement	If the placement breaks down and the young person is evicted, they may be issued with housing advice and viewed as 'intentionally homeless' which would limit assistance from housing services
When the young person leaves care at age 18 to transition to adulthood, they are a priority for housing assistance and will receive social care support until the age of 25 (or 21 years if the young person prefers)	Once the young person turns 18 years old, they are not considered a 'priority' for housing assistance. The young person will be provided with housing advice and assessed as per any other homeless applicant in line with the homeless legislation.

Appendix 5- Housing Advice Leaflet for 16 and 17 Year olds

<https://adviceaid.wirral.gov.uk/advice/advice-for-16-and-17-year-olds>

Appendix 6 – Definitions and Key Contacts

- **‘Young people/ person’** refers to 16 and 17 year olds, including those who are pregnant or have children of their own.
- **‘Homeless’** in relation to housing services refers to section 175 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended)
- **‘Requiring accommodation’** in relation to children’s services refers to section 20 of the Childrens Act 1989
- **‘Threatened with Homelessness’** means likely to become homeless in the next 56 days.
- **‘Housing services’** means local housing authority and specifically the Housing Options Team
- **‘Childrens Services’** means local authority Childrens Social Care.
- **‘The 1989 Act’** refers to the Childrens Act 1989
- **‘The 1996 Act’** refers to the Housing Act 1996 (as amended)
- **‘An eligible child’** is a child who is aged 16/17 years and who has been looked after by a local authority for a least 13 weeks since they were 14 years old and continues to be looked after.
- **‘A relevant child’** is a child aged 16/17 years who is no longer looked after by a local authority, but who was before they ceased to be looked after as an eligible child.
- **‘A qualifying child’** is a child aged sixteen or older who has been looked after for a period amounting to less than 13 weeks since their 14th birthday, and was looked after, or on their 16th birthday.

Key Contacts

Childrens Social Services:

Phone 0151 606 2008 (option2)

Email ifd@wirral.gov.uk

Housing Services (Housing Options Team)

Phone 0151 666 5511

Email housingoptions@wirral.gov.uk

Online referral www.wirral.gov.uk/housingsupport

Emergency Duty Team (Outside of office hours)

Phone 0151 677 6557

Barnardo’s:

Phone 0151 228 4455

Email wirralservices@barnardos.org.uk