



## Youth Homelessness Presentations

### Joint Working Protocol

#### Introduction

Young people may become homeless for a variety of reasons, 16 and 17 year olds who are struggling with housing or threatened with homelessness are likely to be vulnerable and will often be at risk in the absence of support. Supporting, reunifying with family, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of these young people should be central to service provision. It is essential that organisations work together to plan and provide services that are centred on young people and their families to continue living at home, which is more often than not the best place for young people.

The Youth Homelessness Joint Working Protocol aims to define the working arrangements for all agencies involved in supporting 16 & 17 year olds who are in need of advice and assistance due to struggling with accommodation, or at risk of being homeless. All organisations involved are committed to working together to support families to stay together.

This protocol defines the pathways young people who present as struggling to remain at home can follow in order to access support. The effective implementation of the pathway relies on all agencies working together and delivering agreed actions. Key agencies include all 7 Lincolnshire District Councils (DC's), Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) and the Nacro Education, Support and Transitions Service (NEST). NEST is a commissioned service designed to provide support hours within semi-independent accommodation to young people in Lincolnshire.

This protocol aims to ensure that a vulnerable group of young people receive the support that they need in order to return home, stay close to their family and to achieve their potential. It also aims to ensure that all agencies, which have a statutory duty towards this group of young people, are able to understand and discharge their duties.

If a young person is a Looked After Child (child in care), or has Leaving Care Status, then they will receive support direct from the Children in Care teams or the Leaving Care Service. Children in Care and Leaving Care teams can directly access the offer and should contact Lincolnshire County Council for NEST accommodation through the Youth Housing team e-mail address [YouthHousing@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:YouthHousing@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

The Youth Housing Officer needs to be made aware of any Children in Care or Care Leavers moving in to NEST, and the Youth Housing Team will be required to notify the YH officer of placements being requested and made; this is only to help facilitate management oversight of the capacity within the provision.

## **Statutory Responsibilities**

Housing Act 1996 – Part 7, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 further amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

### Accessing services

In accordance with s179, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, further amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017, Councils have a duty to provide an advice service to residents in their area. This District Councils (in Lincolnshire) offers advice, information and assistance on housing rights, responsibilities and options.

In accordance with s184, if the District Housing Authority has reason to believe the applicant may be homeless or threatened with homelessness, they will make enquiries as to whether they are eligible for assistance, and if so, what duty is owed. This includes practical assistance which is available to help people remain in their current home or access alternative suitable accommodation.

Under the Homelessness duty, this support has been extended to 56 days under Homelessness Reduction Act. HRA legally obliges Local Authorities to assess and provide more meaningful assistance to all people who are eligible and homeless or threatened with homelessness irrespective of their priority need status.

## **1. Young People who are Homeless or at risk of Homelessness (Not open to Children Services)**

If a young person aged 16 or 17 presents to a District Council (DC) as homeless or struggling with staying at home, the DC's will make every effort to support the young person to return home and seek to support their safe transit back to family and or carers.

The DC's will:

- Ascertain actual homelessness or risk of homelessness. If a young person is not at risk of immediate homelessness (within the next two weeks) however there are concerns in regards to possible future risk, then a Child and Family Assessment should be completed with the young person to fully explore the situation. If additional intervention is required a request for Early Help support can be made by sending a copy of the child and family assessment to [TACAdmin@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:TACAdmin@lincolnshire.gov.uk).
- Explain the options available to them and the realities and complexities in regards to private rented, Social Housing and NEST – ensuring the young person is aware of affordability, locality issues and restrictions.
- Contact the parent/carer to discuss the situation and explore the viability of the young person returning to the family home, ensuring that parents are aware that they have parental responsibility
- Explore and source suitable alternative emergency accommodation with family/friends.

- If not resolved and only if an emergency arrangement is made, complete a Child and Family Assessment with the young person and submit this to request support from the LCC Restoring Family Relationships Team.
- Submit the request by email at: [Youth\\_Homelessness@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Youth_Homelessness@lincolnshire.gov.uk)
- The request should be submitted at the earliest opportunity, to enable the Restoring Family Relationships Team to start supporting the young person to return to the family home and fully explore alternative housing options.
- Referrals to the Restoring Family Relationships Team should be made for between 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday.
- Any young person who present as homeless, out of hours, will be directed to and supported by LCC'S Emergency Duty Team (EDT) 01522 782111. EDT is responsible for informing LCC Restoring Family Relationships team, to enable them to start supporting the young person, the next working day, before 9.00am via [Future4MeLeadership@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Future4MeLeadership@lincolnshire.gov.uk).
- After any decision to place a young person, there remains a responsibility on all professionals to support young people to return home if safe to do so.

\*Where a 16 or 17 year old who was living in one local authority area and moves to another local authority area and seeks assistance from Children's Services in that local authority, the duty to assess falls on the authority area in which the young person presents. The authority cannot refuse to consider the young person's immediate needs and expect them to return to the authority in the area presumed to be their 'home' district. An initial interview, combined with enquiries in the area where the young person came from, should be sufficient to establish their connection with the area where they have sought help and their reasons for seeking help there rather than in their 'home' district.

These enquiries may be able to establish whether it may be possible for the young person to return to the 'home' district. For example, it might be possible for the authority where the young person seeks help to negotiate with their 'home' authority to take over the assessment of the young person's needs, so that the young person is assessed in a familiar setting close to their family and friends.\*

## **2. LCC Restoring Family Relationships Team**

The flow of work for the following section and referrals to Youth Homelessness can be seen in **Appendix 1: Pathway of Assessment for 16/17 Year Old's Youth Homelessness**

The Restoring Family Relationships Team will make every effort to support the young person to return home. If a young person returns to the family home, or goes to stay with alternative friends/family members, the Restoring Family Relationships Worker should ensure there is on-going support from agencies to maintain these arrangements and sustain the safety of the young person.

Where homelessness is not prevented and the young person might need to access suitable alternative accommodation, a request to explore alternative accommodation requires approval from the relevant Corporate Parenting Manager or Children's Services Team Head of Service. The manager will input onto the case notes authorisation and the requirement to hold a planning meeting within 48 hours with the young person and the NEST. Dependant on the young person's needs, this could be within NEST commissioned youth housing

contract or supported lodgings and agreement to access service must be agreed with the Corporate Parenting Manger.

In all cases where a young person is placed in NEST accommodation, they should never be closed to support from LCC and should at the very least remain open to Early Help for support to move on to new accommodation.

In considering suitability, children's services should take into consideration that 16 and 17 year olds who are homeless and estranged from their family will be vulnerable and in need of support, and therefore it would not usually be appropriate for them to be placed in temporary accommodation without on-site support. Bed and breakfast accommodation, including hotels and nightly let accommodation with shared facilities, is not considered suitable for any 16 or 17 year olds.

The Restoring Family Relationships Team should ensure that the referrer is kept up to date, informed and involved regarding the young person.

Where a young person is suspected not to have recourse to public funds please check guidance and seek support to verify their status should be sought - [No Recourse to Public Funds - Citizens Advice](#) - for further information

### **3. On-going Assessment and support**

If a young person has accessed alternative accommodation (NEST, Supported lodgings), and is not a Child in Care, LCC has a Statutory Responsibility to proactively offer young people a Social Care Assessment. Young people will be given the leaflet found in **Appendix 2** so that they understand their rights, entitlements and the possible outcomes.

If a young person accesses alternative accommodation (NEST and Supported lodgings) then proactive and continued attempts must be made by Early Help team, FGC and Restoring Family Relationships Team to mediate with the young person and their family in order to rebuild the relationship in that family and to increase the potential for a young person returning home whilst we continue to support them with housing.

Any decision about a young person's status is to be agreed through Support Panel

### **4. Young People already open to Children's Services**

The flow of work for the following section and referrals to Youth Homelessness can be seen in **Appendix 3: Pathway of Assessment for 16/17 Year old's Youth Homelessness Open to LCC Services.**

If a young person aged 16 & 17, is identified as struggling with housing and is already open to the LCC's Children's Service Teams, the lead for any support involved will be the current Children Services worker. They will be responsible for making every effort to support the young person to remain at home or return home.

The involved CS worker will:

- Ascertain actual homelessness or risk of homelessness
- Understand and capture the reasons for presentation and the request for support
- Understand the reasons for struggling with housing and work holistically with the young person, their family and all agencies involved to address these issues
- Explain the options available to the young person, including the realities of these options and the fact that Youth Housing is not the best or first option
- Contact the parent/carer to discuss the situation and explore the viability of the young person to return to the family home, ensuring that parents are aware of their parental responsibilities.
- Explore taking the young person to the family home to discuss the situation and ensure parents and carers understand their responsibilities.
- Explore and contact suitable alternative emergency accommodation with family/friends.
- Any agreement to accommodate a young person in youth housing must be agreed with the Corporate Parenting Manager.
- The manager will input onto the case notes authorisation and the requirement to hold a planning meeting within 48 hours with the young person and the NEST.
- If not resolved then the LCC involved worker will complete a referral with the young person, to the Youth Housing Team, via email at [YouthHousing@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:YouthHousing@lincolnshire.gov.uk) After any decision to place a young person, there remains a responsibility on all professionals to support young people to return home if safe to do so

Again, if a young person accesses alternative accommodation (NEST and Supported lodgings) then proactive and continued attempts must be made by every team to mediate with the young person and their family in order to rebuild the relationship in that family and to increase the potential for a young person returning home whilst we continue to support them with housing.

## 5. Reporting Monitoring / Review

The Youth Housing Operations Group of all partner agencies and meets every 6 weeks (**terms of reference Appendix 4**) in order to ensure on going communication, joint working and oversight of Young people in our accommodation options who are undergoing assessment and those who are not Looked After by LCC.

Outside of these meetings, NEST Housing Providers should advise the LCC Commissioning Team if:

1. There are changes to a young person's housing or support needs.
2. A young person's tenancy is at Risk

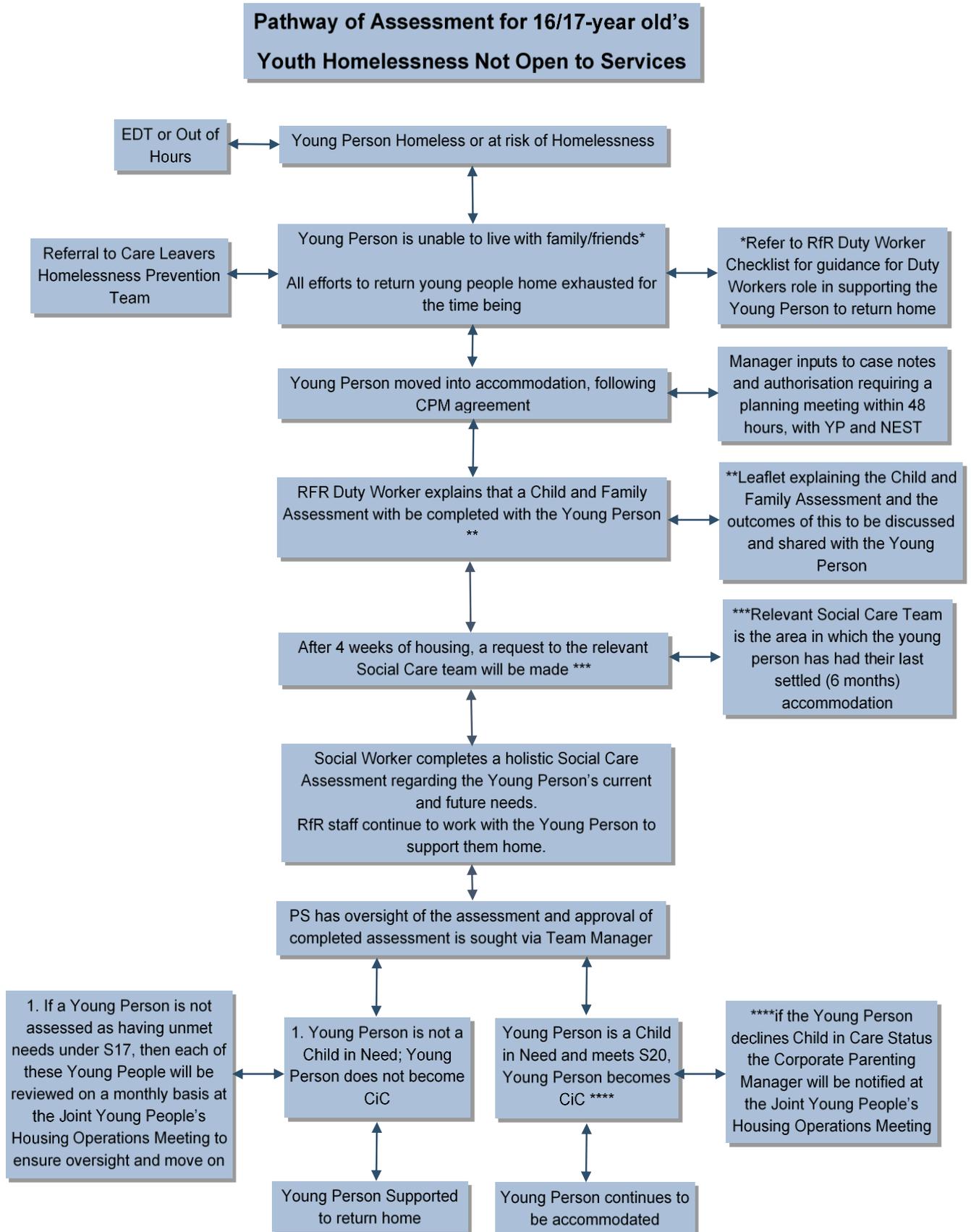
The LCC Commissioning Team will maintain a record of all young people who present as homeless to district councils and children's services and provide a performance report.

## 6. Professional Resolution and Escalation

Effective joint working relies on open and honest relationships between agencies, which includes professional challenge, problem solving and seeking resolution; this is an integral part of effective working. The Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership (LSCP)

Professional Resolution and Escalation Protocol should be followed when individuals/agencies are unable to agree in regards to decisions/ actions regarding a young person. Professional Resolution and Escalation Protocol can be found [HERE](#)

## Appendix 1: Pathway of Assessment for 16/17 Year Old's Youth Homelessness Not open to Services

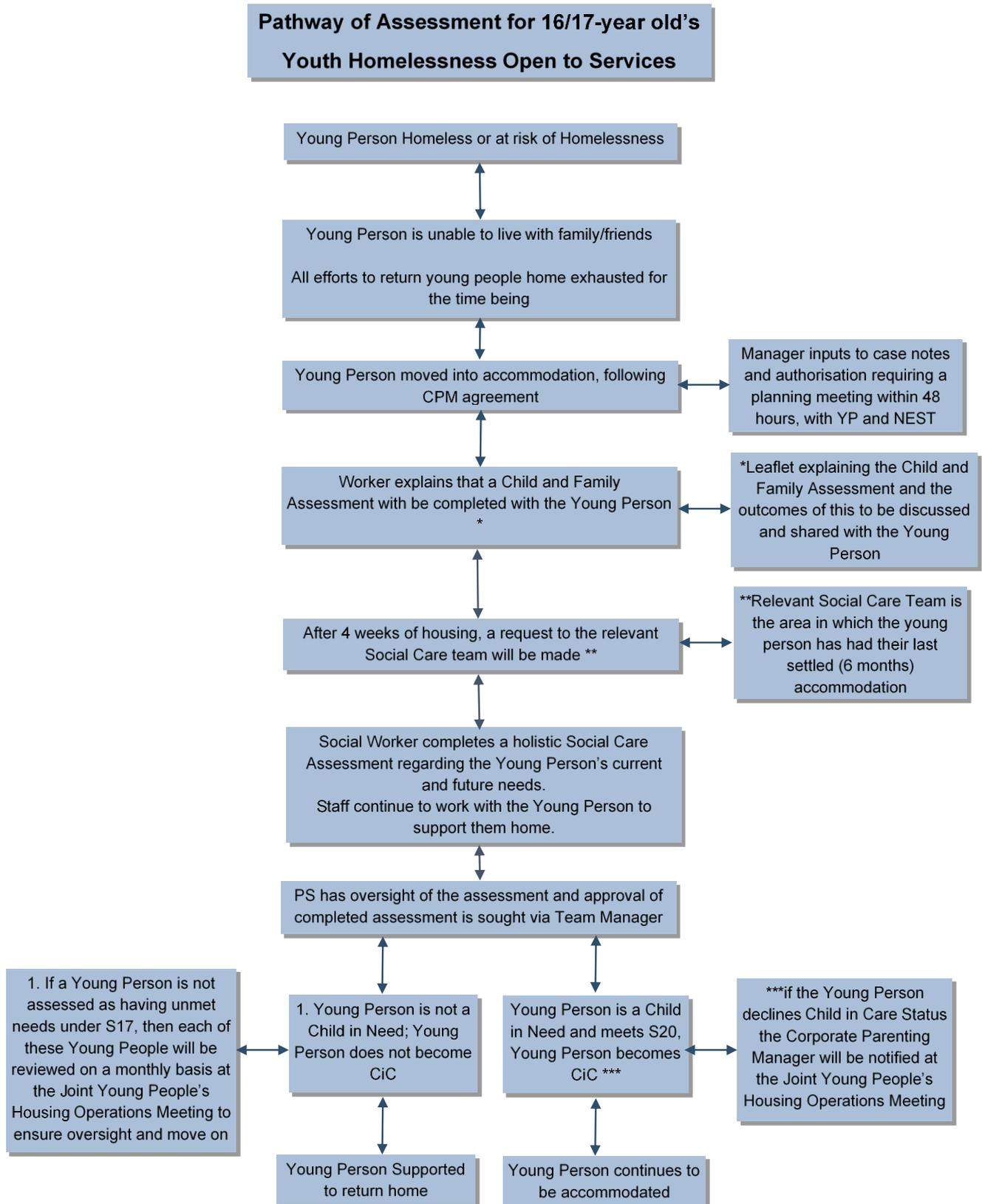


## Appendix 2: Guidance Leaflet



SCA leaflet for YP  
v2.pub

**Appendix 3: Pathway of Assessment for 16/17 Year old's Youth Homelessness Open to Services**



## Appendix 4: Terms of Reference



### Lincolnshire Children in Care and Care Leavers Transition Panel

#### Terms of Reference

##### Membership:

Andy Morris – Corporate Parenting Manager

Sarah Caskie-Hefferman – Operations Manager Nacro

Jemma Munton – Lincs Housing Partnerships Manager

Hellena Middleton – Transition Coordinator Nacro

Joanne Lynn - Housing Coordinator Barnardo's

Michelle Hakes - Practice Supervisor, Children in Care (North & South with transitional lead)

Hester Poole – Contracts Officer Nacro – minute taker

##### Purpose of the meeting:

- 1) To ensure there is clear operational oversight of the number of Children in Care and Care Leavers who are not suitably housed / at risk of homelessness
- 2) To discuss and assess participation of districts in protocols and service level agreements to maximize the knowledge of the multiagency team countywide
- 3) To share information to improve outcomes and the level of independence achieved by young people
- 4) To ensure that safe and appropriate move on plans are put in place for complex and challenging young people
- 5) A forum for colleagues to bring challenges they are facing in moving young people on to more independent accommodation, and to seek support in finding solutions to meet those young people's housing need
- 6) To coordinate an annual review of Lincolnshire's Youth Homelessness Joint Working Protocol
- 7) To coordinate an annual review of Lincolnshire's Protocol for Transition from Children's Services to Adult Housing Related Support and (Semi) Independent Living for people over 18

### **Responsibilities:**

- 1) All group members will complete actions assigned within the agreed timescales
- 2) All group members will update the group in between meetings if actions cannot or have not been completed. This is to minimise the risk that actions are left incomplete
- 3) All members of the group will highlight specific agenda items to be added prior to each meeting

### **Method of Working:**

- The meeting will take place every 8 weeks
- The Chairing responsibility will be a rotational responsibility between Andrew Morris and Sarah Caskie-Hefferman
- All members have a responsibility to add items to the agenda and will send these items to the minute taker at least 5 days in advance of the meeting
- Nacro and Barnardos will agree a maximum of 4 Young People to be discussed at each meeting with names and mosaic number and district circulated, this list will be circulated at least 2 days ahead of the meeting
- The Agenda will be collated by the minute taker and circulated at least 2 day ahead of the meeting

### **Quorum**

- Members are expected to prioritise attendance to the meeting and to send a suitable substitute in their absence who can act on their behalf.

### **Confidentiality**

- It is important that board members are able to share concerns or issues in a confidential environment and to work together in a concerted manner.
- Within meetings and email contact, group members will not attribute comments made by members or disclose personal information to anyone without the member's consent. Members are required to identify to the Chair any known conflicts of interest they may have in relation to any aspect of this programme.