Journeys to Home:
Care leavers’ successful transition to independent accommodation

Funded by
department for
children, schools and families
National Care Advisory Service (NCAS)

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This guide was published as part of the accommodation project funded in 2008–9 by the DCSF.

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The National Care Advisory Service (NCAS) focuses on improving young people’s transition from care. We are the national advice, support and development service for young people in and from care (age 13–25), their corporate parents and those who support them. NCAS works at local, regional, national and EU levels to develop solutions based on good corporate parenting that include and empower young people and influence professionals and policy-makers to continually improve service quality and outcomes.
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When a child is taken into the care the local authority becomes his or her corporate parent. As any reasonable parent, the local authority should support that child through their transition to adulthood and all the benefits and responsibilities that entails. Two of the most common characteristics that young people and those who work with them identify as being associated with becoming an adult are setting up home and entering into education training or employment. For most young people the transition to adulthood extends well into their twenties with opportunities to return home if events do not go as planned. This is not the experience of young people leaving local authority care who leave care significantly earlier than their peers with little chance of returning.

NCAS work with local authorities and their partners to improve the prospects of older looked after children, those in the transition of leaving care and those who have left care. Safe, suitable and affordable accommodation is the foundation on which young people can manage the challenges of adulthood and realise their aspirations. The profile of care leavers’ need for suitable accommodation has been significantly improved by the implementation of the Care Matters agenda and the current central Government Public Service Agreement 16 which aims to increase the numbers of care leavers at age 19 in suitable accommodation. While we in NCAS have concerns about the definitions of ‘suitable accommodation’ and the need to measure at later and earlier junctures we welcome the fact that nationally and locally there is an impetus to improve the accommodation prospects for young people leaving care. We are also looking forward to the full implementation of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 and the revised statutory guidance from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), we are hopeful this will support local authorities in their corporate parenting responsibilities.

Similar to other services for those in local authority care, there is a disparity in young people accessing suitable accommodation across the country. While some areas report good outcomes in this area, others struggle to ensure their young people are in safe, secure and affordable housing. NCAS identified areas of good practice by talking to local authorities and their partners, commissioners, providers and young people. The result of this work is the good practice guide which includes examples from the local authorities and providers who have made a difference. We believe that such examples are compelling evidence that all local authorities, like all reasonable parents, are capable of ensuring their children live in appropriate accommodation. The guide aims to support local authorities and their partners by being practical and easy to use. We hope that with the accompanying work planning tool you find it a valuable resource.

John Hill
National manager
NCAS
Preface

This publication is a good practice guide on accommodation for young people in their transition from and leaving care. It has been developed for local authorities, housing and support providers and those who support young people, and looks at the different pathways that young people take in their transition from and when leaving care. The term ‘care leaver’ has been used while recognising that some young people aged 16 and 17 accessing accommodation other than foster care or a children’s home will still be a looked after child.

The publication examines specific issues for care leavers accessing suitable accommodation and identifies the good practice action that is required to improve the accommodation prospects of care leavers. For ease of reading the good practice guidance is colour coded:

- **S** Strategic work that will be the responsibility of directors of departments e.g. children’s service directors.
- **O** Operational work that will be the responsibility of managers of services e.g. leaving care managers.
- **P** Personal work that will be the responsibility of the practitioners or persons supporting the young person e.g. social worker, personal adviser support worker or foster carer. For ease of reference in the guidance on personal work we have referred to social workers, however we recognise that this work may be carried out by personal advisers.

This guide was produced as part of a DCSF-funded project on improving the accommodation prospects of young people who are leaving care. The content for this guide is the result of interviewing staff who manage services and/or provide support to young people in the transition from care, attending regional leaving care managers’ fora, facilitating workshops on accommodation and care leavers and speaking with care experienced young people. The good practice case studies have been selected by visiting the authority or organisation interviewing key staff, and where possible interviewing the commissioners and young people using the service. The practice examples are scenarios NCAS believe reflect innovative or positive ways of managing services for care leavers or managing key issues for care leavers. We recognise that this is an area where few local authorities perform well on a strategic, operational and personal level, hence the need for this guide, but most local authorities have examples where they have sought to improve practice in at least one area.

Acknowledgements

NCAS wish to thank the members of the virtual reading group for their contribution without which the content of the guide would have been considerably poorer: Mark Burrows (DCSF), Rob Dunster (Warwickshire Council), Stuart Lorkin (Cabinet Office), Val Keen and Alan Edwards (both CLG). NCAS is very grateful to Dave Pendle from the Foyer Federation who contributed to the Foyer section and Judy Walsh from Fostering Network for her insightful comments on the Foster care conversions and supported lodgings section.

This guide has been produced by the National Care Advisory Service (NCAS), part of the national charity Catch22.
Every year around 8,000\(^1\) young people over 16 cease to be looked after in England. Each young person has their own experience. This is one of their journeys:

Steven\(^2\) came into care for the second time when he was 12. He had a number of placements in residential care homes. As Steven approached his 16th birthday through his pathway planning his social worker and personal adviser recognised that although he had many practical skills, there were concerns about his emotional resilience. He just did not have the coping strategies to manage in the wider community as he was used to living in a supportive and protecting environment. Steven remained in care for just under a year after his 16th birthday while workers tried to prepare him for living more independently.

Just before his 17th birthday Steven moved into a local foyer where he stayed for six months. It became obvious he was vulnerable to peer pressure and he began smoking cannabis and drinking alcohol. He was unresponsive to training or education programmes offered, and was given 28 days’ notice, during which time he refused support from foyer workers and his social worker. Social services were forced to make decisions on his behalf — they moved Steven to a flat provided by an independent accommodation provider for 16–18 year-olds.

As soon as Steven reached 18 he was allocated social housing from the local authority. Although extra support was put in place, he did not engage, and within six months he had a large overdraft, crisis loans, loans from independent lenders and outstanding utilities totalling £2,000 of debt. Part of this debt was due to Steven buying drink for his friends, who took advantage of his vulnerability. It became apparent that Steven was not coping or did not like living alone and he eventually abandoned his flat. He gave the keys to a so-called friend who damaged the property and caused neighbourhood nuisance. The arrears and damage totalled £1,800 when Steven gave up his tenancy.

Steven was now relying on his friends to put him up. Two weeks before Christmas his failure to pay board resulted in him being asked to leave. His social worker managed to secure emergency accommodation at a hostel but again he was asked to leave when he refused support, damaged his room and did not pay his personal charge. Steven is currently in a bed and breakfast. No other local supported housing provider will accept him due to his behaviour and the housing department have assessed him as intentionally homeless. He is currently on notice from the bed and breakfast for not paying his personal charge.

Those leaving care are a diverse group of young people with different needs for support, and differing levels of practical and emotional capacity to live independently. Care leavers are especially vulnerable for homelessness. In England, 16/17 year-olds\(^3\) and care leavers aged 18–20 make up eight percent of the total homelessness acceptances, however they are only three per cent of the total population.\(^4\)

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1 In 2008 8,300 young people left care www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000810/index.shtml
2 Name has been changed.
3 16 and 17 year-olds who are not in the care system.
4 Joint working between Housing and Children’s services, DCSF May 2008.
Not surprisingly becoming homeless was in the top ten fears of children leaving care.\(^5\)

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 Guidance states: ‘because of the diverse needs of care leavers and the way in which these will change over time, local authorities are likely to require a range of accommodation options’. These options include training flats, supported lodgings, supported housing, foyers, independent accommodation and floating support.

The existence of this provision in itself is not enough to ensure that young people like Steven make a successful transition to living more independently. Many young people (a quarter of those leaving care) leave their care placement as early as 16 (compared with their peers who on average leave home aged 24)\(^6\) and like Steven are often unprepared for the emotional resilience and living skills this involves. In addition to accessible provision, those leaving care need to be equipped for the reality of living more independently; those providing accommodation should be aware of the unique needs of this vulnerable client group.

The guide focuses on what needs to be in place strategically to ensure that partnership working considers accommodation for care leavers in housing and related strategies, operationally to ensure that there is a range of suitable accommodation to meet the diversity of needs of care leavers and on a personal level to prepare and support each young person in living more independently.

Such work will minimise the number of young people in Steven’s position. It presents good practice case studies and practice examples from across England where local authorities, third sector and private providers have sought to make a difference to the accommodation prospects of young people leaving care.

It will come as no revelation that partnership working has been key to enhancing accommodation options for care leavers, be it with (and within) local authorities, third sector, private providers and, most importantly, with the young people themselves.

Care leavers are a diverse group of young people and it has not been possible for to look at the specific needs of young people with a disability, young parents, unaccompanied asylum seeking children and those at risk of offending. All these young people are entitled to the same services as their peers while being looked after and upon leaving care but it is recognised that these groups of young people may need specialist accommodation services and can present their own complex issues. Where possible the resource and web link section will highlight useful resources and NCAS will be developing resources on disability in 2009–10.

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\(^5\) Young people’s views on leaving care — report of the Children’s Rights Director 2006.

\(^6\) Green paper: Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care 2006.
Chapter summary:
The legislative and policy framework leaving care services are delivered within should ensure that the approach to providing settled accommodation for care leavers is well thought out and strategic, not just a safety net for vulnerable young people.

Legal framework
There is a legislative and policy framework designed to ensure that care leavers are appropriately accommodated. For young people in care the local authority is their corporate parent; thus the legislative and policy framework should provide for care leavers in a way that reasonable parents do for their own children.

The legal framework, specific to care leavers, seeks to ensure that care leavers receive the right services to enable their transition to adulthood, including access to accommodation. There is also legislation, which is not specific to care leavers, such as general homelessness legislation, that provides a valuable safety net if a young person experiences homelessness after leaving care.

Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and guidance and regulations
The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 amended the Children Act 1989 and imposed duties (including accommodation duties) on local authorities to support certain categories of looked after children and care leavers. (See table overleaf.)

The statutory guidance to the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 does not specify any particular type of accommodation for care leavers, but states that it would be inappropriate for 16 and 17-year-old care leavers to live completely independently and that the use of bed and breakfast accommodation should only be very occasional and short-term.

The regulations and guidance stipulate that local authorities should take steps to make sure that young people have the best chance to succeed in their accommodation. They should:

- Avoid moving young people who are settled.
- Assess young people’s needs and prepare them for any move.
- Ensure that the accommodation meets any needs relating to impairment.
- Where practicable offer a choice of accommodation.
- Set up a package of support to go with the accommodation.
- Have a clear financial plan for the accommodation and have a contingency plan.

The regulations and guidance also detail how the local authority strategy for care leavers should take into account:

- The diverse accommodation and support needs of care leavers.
- The capacity to offer young people a degree of choice in accommodation.
- Existing and planned provision of safe affordable accommodation.
- Gaps in provision.
- Priority setting.
- The need for contingency arrangements.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you are a/an</th>
<th>Children’s services must</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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| **Eligible child** — child aged 16 and 17 who have been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who remain looked after. | • Meet accommodation, personal and education related expenses.  
• Carry out a needs assessment.  
• Prepare a Pathway Plan, building on the child’s existing care plan.  
• Regularly review the Pathway Plan.  
• Appoint a Personal Adviser. |
| **Relevant child** — child aged 16 and 17 who have been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who have left care. | • Carry out a needs assessment.  
• Prepare a Pathway Plan.  
• Regularly review the Pathway Plan.  
• Provide a Personal Adviser.  
• Arrange suitable accommodation and pay for furnishings.  
• Provide an allowance, which must not be less than if on benefits. Relevant children cannot claim benefits unless they are disabled or a lone parent.  
• Pay for any additional costs set out in the Pathway Plan.  
• Keep in touch with the young person. |
| **Former relevant child** — 18–21 year old (or until the end of agreed programme of education or trainings) who were previously ‘eligible’ or ‘relevant’. | • Maintain the Pathway Plan.  
• Provide a Personal Adviser.  
• Contribute to the costs of support set out in the Pathway Plan, in so far as the young person’s welfare requires this.  
• Contribute towards the costs of education and vacation accommodation.  
• Keep in touch with the young person. |
| **Qualifying child** — Any young person under 21 (or 24 if in education or training) who ceases to be looked after or accommodated in a variety of other settings, or privately fostered, after the age of 16. | • Give advice and support.  
• Keep in touch with the young person.  
• May also help with paying expenses related to the young person’s education. |

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7 The Pathway Plan must cover arrangements for accommodation and appropriate support for the young person and, through its implementation, should ensure that the young person avoids homelessness.
The 1996 Housing Act and the Homelessness Act 2002

Under the homelessness legislation, (Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996) local authorities must secure suitable accommodation for a person who:

- is eligible for assistance (broadly, their immigration status is not restricted);
- is homeless (or threatened with homelessness within 28 days);
- has a priority need for accommodation (specified categories of people);
- is not intentionally homeless.\(^8\)

The Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002 extended the priority need categories. Among others, they now include:

- homeless 18–20 year-olds who were in care at 16 or 17 except for those in higher residential or further education requiring vacation accommodation;
- homeless people over the age of 21 who are vulnerable as a result of being in care in the past.

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on housing authorities to have a strategy for preventing homelessness and ensuring that accommodation and support will be available for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness — and places a duty on social services departments to assist in the development of the strategy. Both authorities must take the strategy into account in discharging their functions.

Statutory Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities (July 2006)\(^9\)

In July 2006 Communities and Local Government (CLG) issued statutory guidance which local housing authorities must have regard to when discharging their homelessness functions. Aspects of this guidance also apply to social services authorities when exercising their functions relating to homelessness.

The Code states that care leavers are among the groups likely to be more at risk of homelessness than others and:

- Social services departments’ information about numbers of care leavers may assist housing departments in conducting homelessness reviews.
- It is important that wherever possible the housing needs of care leavers are addressed before they leave care.
- Making arrangements for accommodation and ensuring that care leavers are provided with suitable housing support will be an essential aspect of a young person’s Pathway Plan.
- Where necessary, arrangements should be made for joint assessment by social services and housing authorities as a part of a multi-agency assessment to inform the Pathway Plan.

Whether young people leaving care are accommodated by the social services authority or the housing authority is for individual authorities to determine in each case. Ideally, there should be jointly agreed protocols in place in respect of the assessment of needs.

The Children Act 2004

The Children Act 2004\(^10\) sets out the process for integrating services for children so that every child can achieve the five outcomes laid out in the green paper *Every Child Matters*:

- be healthy;
- stay safe;
- enjoy and achieve;

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\(^8\) A person deliberately did (or didn’t do) something that caused them to leave accommodation which they could otherwise have stayed in, and it would have been reasonable for them to stay there.


Policy framework

White Paper Care Matters: Time for change

The White Paper Care Matters sets out how the Government intends to improve the outcomes of young people and children in care. In the chapter on transition to adulthood the Government sets out its proposals regarding young people leaving care and how their accommodation needs should be met. These include:

- A transition support program (2008—11) for disabled children.
- Right2BCared4 pilots to increase the voice of care leavers in decisions about their care, including moving to an independent placement.
- ‘Staying put’ pilots allowing young people to stay with their foster carers up to 21.
- Researching the demand for young people to stay in children’s homes.
- Increasing the range of supported accommodation.
- A capital investment fund to support the provision of accommodation for care leavers.

Joint working between housing and children’s services

Communities and Local Government (CLG) and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) have produced non-statutory guidance on joint working between housing and children’s services. The guidance recognises that, amongst others, care leavers aged 18—21 are at particular risk of poor outcomes in the absence of joint working. The guidance identifies that housing and children’s services should have:

- a formal joint working protocol;
- joint working arrangements for promoting and planning care leavers’ transition to adulthood specifically;
- a joint protocol to ensure a quick, safe and supportive response to care leavers at risk of homelessness or homeless.

Public Service Agreements 16

Public Service Agreements (PSAs) set out how central government intends to deliver public services. The PSAs are underpinned by the national indicators (NIs, see below), which are used to measure progress. PSA 16 aims to increase the proportion of socially excluded people (care leaver, age 19, being a specific group) in ‘settled accommodation’ and ‘employment, education and training’. The Cabinet Office has the lead on this PSA but, as it is a cross-departmental delivery plan, amongst other departments, DCSF and CLG are also responsible for delivery. Central government will monitor progress through regional government offices.

Local Area Agreements

Local Area Agreements (LAAs) are agreements between central government (through the regional government offices), local authorities and their partners. They focus on both national outcomes and meeting local priorities. The Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) are responsible for delivering LAAs. The performance framework for the LAA consists of 198 national indicators (NIs). There are two indicators that concern outcomes for care leavers:

11 publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=Cm%25207137
12 Joint Working between Housing and Children’s Services Preventing homelessness and tackling its effect on children and young people May 2008 www.communities.gov.uk
13 www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/psa.aspx
● **NI 147**: measures the percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation at the age of 19.

● **NI 148**: measures the percentage of care leavers in employment, education and training at age 19.

Having these indicators has raised the profile of care leavers nationally and locally. The outcomes measures are reported on and provide a useful lever for leaving care services to improve the accommodation prospects for care leavers.

### Supporting People

Supporting People is the name given to the Government’s programme for the funding, quality assurance and strategic development of non-statutory housing-related support services. CLG allocates Supporting People grants to local authorities who plan, commission and monitor housing related support, in line with their Supporting People strategy. The majority of services are commissioned as whole projects, e.g. a 20-bed supported housing unit for young vulnerable people.

Young people leaving care will not automatically be provided with Supporting People funded services when they reach 18, as individuals do not have a right to be provided with such services, nor does the local authority have a duty to provide a Supporting People funded service. It is up to local authorities to decide what services they fund with their allocation.

Prior to April 2009 young people in and from care under the age of 18 were not eligible to receive Supporting People services directly. They could live in Supporting People accommodation but providers/Supporting People teams recharged leaving care or children’s services for the support. From April 2009 the ring-fence preventing Supporting People monies from being spent on statutory services has been removed although most recharging arrangements are continuing. In addition, most people living in Supporting People services have their rent paid through housing benefit. Leaving care and children’s services would also have to cover rent for those young people under 18 who are not eligible for housing benefit. Some local authorities, Supporting People teams and children’s services have jointly commissioned services for young people, which include services for care leavers.

The Supporting People outcomes framework is based on the DCSF’s *Every child matters outcomes*. Data is captured every time a service user departs from a Supporting People funded short term service. NCAS have produced a report on care leaver’s utilisation of Supporting People services.

### Choice based lettings

Prior to choice based letting, local authorities would allocate available properties, appropriate for that person’s needs, to those who had reached the ‘top’ of the housing list. Choice based letting (CBL) schemes allow people to apply for social rented accommodation, which is openly advertised. Applicants can see the full range of available properties and apply for any home which matches their needs. The successful applicant is the one with the highest priority under the scheme. Applicants are prioritised using points or banding systems. The system relies on applicants proactively bidding and systems usually allow for properties to be advertised in a variety of ways, including local newspapers, internet, in council offices, and bids to be accepted by email, in person or by phone/text. Those who are deemed to be in priority need under homelessness legislation (which can include certain care leavers) are usually given a high priority, although often only for a limited period of time. The

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14 The definition of suitable accommodation for this indicator is safe, secure and affordable provision for young people, including short term accommodation, but not emergency, bed and breakfast or custody.

15 See [www.spclientrecord.org.uk/webdata/](http://www.spclientrecord.org.uk/webdata/) for data on care leavers.


government expects all local authorities to operate choice based lettings by 2010, and some local authorities are including private sector leasing and low cost home ownership in their schemes.

**Housing supply**

Work to increase housing supply is coordinated on a national, regional and local level. Local authorities housing strategies feed into and relate to regional housing strategies, which in turn are related to the government’s national policy. In *Homes for the future: more affordable more sustainable* the Government has set out proposals for increasing the supply of affordable housing. In particular the Government has set itself ambitious targets for social rented accommodation, 45,000 new units a year by 2010/11.

Care leavers’ housing needs should be addressed in the local authority’s overall housing strategy or the youth homelessness strategy, which feeds into it.

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### Additional resources and web links

- NCAS web site
  [www.leavingcare.org/professionals/whoarewe/projects/accommodation](http://www.leavingcare.org)
- [www.shelter.org.uk/england.shelter.org.uk/get_advice/homelessness/help_from_social_services/support_for_care_leavers](http://www.shelter.org.uk/england.shelter.org.uk/get_advice/homelessness/help_from_social_services/support_for_care_leavers)
- DCSF
  [www.dcsf.gov.uk](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk)
- White paper: *Care Matters: Time for Change*
- CLG
  [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)
- Housing Green paper
- [www.spkweb.org.uk](http://www.spkweb.org.uk)
- Cabinet office
  [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/psa.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/psa.aspx)

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Chapter summary:
The most positive results in providing accommodation services to young care leavers are achieved when the service is seen as the responsibility of the local authority as a whole, at a departmental head level.

Introduction

When children become looked after the local authority assumes responsibility to act as a corporate parent. Like any reasonable parent, the local authority will want to ensure that the young people for whom it is responsible move on to suitable and settled accommodation. The corporate parenting responsibility does not just sit with children’s services or leaving care teams, but with all departments within the children services authority.

Local authorities are already reporting improvements on the numbers of care leavers in suitable accommodation at age 19. To sustain these, local authorities will have to ensure that they take a strategic approach to managing care leaver access to a range of suitable accommodation options. Effective strategic work relies on a broad framework of funding streams and services. Formal relationships between children’s services, housing agencies and other services need to underpin this framework to ensure that there is a high level commitment, effective communication, partnership working and joint planning across the authority.

Identifying needs and services

Each local authority should understand the needs of their population of children in care and care leavers. Each care leaver will have a Pathway Plan developed before they move on from their final care placement, identifying their accommodation needs. This provides a basis for identifying care leavers’ future housing needs. This can be used to inform the relevant housing/accommodation strategy – e.g. care leavers’ accommodation strategy, youth homelessness strategy or broader housing strategy.

Department heads of children’s and housing services should ensure that current and future accommodation and related support needs of young people leaving care, are specifically included in the local authority’s homeless strategy, housing strategy, Supporting People strategy and the Children and Young Peoples’ Plan.

As part of any young person’s needs assessments it will be essential to identify young people with enduring care needs and to arrange for appropriate support for their transition to adult care services. Adult services utilise Fair Access to Care (FACS) guidance in determining eligibility for social care services which can act as a barrier to young people’s transition from children to adult services.

Protocols should be in place between leaving care and adult services that ensure that young people who have been assessed as having enduring care needs are able to be assessed for adult social care accommodation services during the early stages of their transition to adulthood. Protocols should include how FACS guidance will be utilised for young people in transit from children to adult services.
Practice example

Plymouth is a unitary authority which has approximately 35 young people leaving care each year. Plymouth has recently revised its protocol between adult and children’s services to ensure that it better facilitates the transition to adult services. The protocol and transition pathway have a multi-agency agreement and include ‘vulnerable young people with complex needs’. It has clear timelines for assessment and service delivery and is based on the person centred planning model. There are two levels of accountability within the protocol. The operational group, chaired by Connexions, is a multi-agency group that considers all referrals at age 16 and allocates an appropriate adult services worker to work jointly with children’s services. The strategic group chaired by the Learning Disability Partnership Manager provides monitoring and evaluation of the protocol, feeds into the commissioning function and resolves disputes.

Contact Emma.E.J.Pullen@plymouth.gov.uk

It is important that the staff that support care leavers have both an understanding of the needs of young people leaving care and the housing options available to them.

Local authorities should ensure that relevant staff in housing and leaving care services have the skills and experience to deliver housing solutions for young people leaving care.

In addition to needs mapping, it will be important that the local authority identifies the accommodation and support services that are available to young people in their area. These include generic young people’s services and those that are care leaver specific, encompassing those provided by local authority, third sector and private providers.

Any mapping will need to be repeated regularly to ensure that planning is based on an up to date picture of needs and provision.

Leaving care services in conjunction with housing departments and Supporting People should regularly map housing and support services available in their area.

Action planning

The mapping exercises will identify any duplication or gaps in services required and enable an action plan to be drawn up.

The action plan could include the following themes:

- Prevention of placement breakdown — e.g. mediation with carers, neighbours; preparation for adult living.
- Development of accommodation based support provision.
- Remodelling or re-commissioning of current provision.
- Working with other local authorities to develop specialised provision — e.g. for care leavers with profound learning disabilities or sensory impairment.
- Increasing supply of appropriate settled housing.
- Developing protocols for supporting young people in and out of borough placements — e.g. developing reciprocal arrangements.
- Developing tenancy sustainment provision — e.g. floating support.
- Developing links with third and private sector.

19 Where the local authority has one tier that provides all the local government functions including children’s services and housing.
An action plan should include the targets the local authority wants to set itself, and how it is going to measure its progress against those targets. It should also include who will be responsible and the time frames for delivery of those targets.

**Practice example**

**Essex** is a two-tier\(^{20}\) area that has over 100 young people leaving care each year. Essex leaving care services engaged with the 12 housing departments within the county, (and housing providers), in seeking to achieve a LAA target of improving on the accommodation outcomes of care leavers. The target is based on meeting accommodation needs of care leavers on a month by month basis during the three years of the LAA (which ended March 2009). This has led to much better working relationships with housing professionals via regular area based local steering groups, joint training and improved planning. Better quality information has been made available to young people, carers and residential staff in relation to future options (information leaflets, internal website (My base), information sessions etc.)

The target (55.5 percent) has been consistently exceeded, and on average over 86 percent of young people have been recorded as having accommodation which meets their assessed needs.

**Contact** terry.willis@essex.gov.uk

**Partnership working**

In order to develop and implement the action plan local authorities will have to work in partnership with a number of statutory, third sector and private partners. Multi-agency working is only effective if it is underpinned by a commitment from department heads. Too often, even within local authorities, there is evidence of departments working in silos. Two-tier\(^{21}\) areas often find partnership working between county children’s services and housing authorities requires sustained effort from those on the ground coupled with real sense of responsibility from directors of services.

\(^{S}\) Director of children’s services should ensure that the lead elected council member for housing is made aware accommodation issues for care leavers should exist.

\(^{S}\) Lead members should ensure that the director of children’s services/housing director reports annually and in writing on the inclusion of care leavers in the housing strategy.

\(^{S}\) Relevant directors in local authorities should ensure that leaving care services are represented at key fora and meetings, e.g. LSPs, Supporting People commissioning body, to ensure that the housing needs of those leaving care influence housing agendas.

CLG and the DCSF have produced guidance on joint working between housing and children’s services on preventing homelessness and tackling its effect on children and young people. This identified that it was essential for children’s services and housing services and both unitary and two-tier areas to establish joint working arrangements for promoting and planning care leavers’ transition to adulthood. The guidance contains a joint working checklist for housing and children’s services.\(^{22}\)

\(^{20}\) Areas which have a county council and district authorities which each provide different services, for example, the county may provide children’s services and the districts each provide housing.

\(^{21}\) See footnote 15.

Directors of children’s services and housing departments should ensure that joint protocols are in place between children’s services, housing authorities (or those responsible for carrying out the local authority housing functions), health and adult services to facilitate access to appropriate temporary and settled housing for young people. The protocol will ensure that young people do not present as homeless to access accommodation and will have processes to avoid young people leaving care being at risk of or becoming homeless.

Practice example

The East Riding of Yorkshire is a unitary authority and has approximately 25 young people leaving care each year. East Riding has a joint working protocol between housing and children’s services specifically for the needs of young people leaving care. The protocol is based on the regional model developed in the Yorkshire and Humber region.

Contact sue.smyth@eastriding.gov.uk

Children and housing services are not the only ones with a role to play in supporting care leavers achieving and maintaining suitable accommodation. Other key players will include:

- adult social care services;
- the third sector — Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), voluntary, charitable and faith-based organisations;
- Supporting People teams and services;
- primary health care;
- youth offending teams and probation;
- drug and alcohol services;
- Connexions;
- private providers ;
- private landlords;
- education and training providers;
- elected members.

There can be tensions between different partners especially when dealing with limited resources, e.g. housing stock and social care services. It is important that all parties take the time to understand the operating environments of their partners and the constraints they are working within. Local authorities report that it is especially important to develop and maintain good relationships in two-tier areas where services, e.g. housing, are provided by the district authorities but leaving care services are located in the county council.

The responsible local authority should have clear written policies and procedures about how it will provide and/or commission suitable accommodation and support for young people. Policies and procedures should outline the processes where the initial placement is not suitable, including arrangements for suitable accommodation and support in the event of a young person being in immediate need.

Combining resources

Although children’s services have a responsibility to accommodate or pay for accommodation for 16 and 17 year-old young people, in order to provide for the range of care leavers, the most effective responses include pooling or aligning resources with other departments.

Approaches include:

- Children’s services and Supporting People jointly funding services for vulnerable young people. This could entail children’s services paying for specified bed spaces within a project or for access to a certain number of units of housing across provision.
● Supporting People commissioning services for all vulnerable young people and having an arrangement to re-charge leaving care services for care leavers under 18.

● A multi-agency approach that involves all local authority and statutory stakeholders jointly commissioning and funding accommodation for all vulnerable young people, recognising that young people’s needs mean that they can fall into several categories, e.g. young people leaving care may also have mental health needs.

Practice example

Hertfordshire is a two-tier area with approximately 110 young people leaving care every year. Hertfordshire have established an accommodation manager in leaving care services who is responsible for managing the move-on (district and borough council-housing authority) accommodation needs of young people leaving care. The manager, who is from a housing background, is responsible for developing relationships with the ten district housing authorities. Hertfordshire has developed an accommodation strategy which ensures the leaving care services understand housing legislation and language. Hertfordshire have identified the following as critical to success in two-tier area:

● communication of information;
● point of contact in each district housing authority;
● joint training and attending each other’s team meetings;
● invest time and staff resources in housing;
● gaining sign up from the appropriate level both strategically and operationally, e.g. head of housing.

Contact abigail.cope@hertcc.gov.uk

Accommodation and support services should be jointly commissioned by local authority departments such as children’s services, Supporting People, adult services and housing to ensure that young people are provided with seamless provision of services.

Practice example

Plymouth is a unitary authority with approximately 35 young people leaving care each year. Plymouth has set up a Youth Homelessness Innovation Group to facilitate better working between housing and children’s services. The directors of housing and children’s services have endorsed its principles which include no 16/17 year-old being placed in bed and breakfast or sleeping rough and all young people should be well prepared for independence. The group has representation from housing and children’s services and Supporting People who all jointly commission housing and support services.

Contact Richard.Porter@plymouth.gov.uk

Children’s service directors should ensure that homelessness, housing, Supporting People strategies and the Children and Young Persons Plan commission and provide a range of accommodation and support provision to meet the needs of young people, offering choice and alternatives if initial placements are not appropriate.

Local Area Agreements (LAA) provide local authorities with an opportunity to combine budgets to meet wider locally established targets, e.g. supporting vulnerable people in maintaining independent accommodation. The Area Based Grant, which pulls together a number of local funding streams, can be used to commission services to achieve the targets set in the LAA.

23 Briefing on LAAs www.leavingcare.org/data/tmp/3961-8201.pdf
Involving young people

Accommodation continues to be a pressing issue for young people leaving care. Given the role of the local authority as a corporate parent it is of utmost importance for young people in and from care to have an opportunity to influence accommodation at a strategic level. There are some existing fora that engage care leavers and children in care.

Practice example

**Oxfordshire** is a two-tier area which has approximately 45 young people leaving care every year. Oxfordshire have developed a joint housing team, which is a multi-agency team bringing together social work, housing and voluntary sector staff to prevent homelessness among care leavers and other young people. The team works across the county, city and district councils to help deliver the LAA target for reducing youth homelessness and to negotiate and facilitate better planning for care leavers’ housing needs. This has included negotiating move-on agreements with the city and district councils to give care leavers access to social tenancies.

**Contact** clare.rowntree@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Resources can also be combined by seconding over staff from other departments, e.g. housing, to children’s services and leaving care teams.

Practice example

**Birmingham** is a unitary authority which has approximately 150 young people leaving care each year. St Basils manages the Housing Options services for all young people in the city on behalf of the city council. An accommodation pathways coordinator has been seconded to the leaving care team and to the Youth Offending Team from St Basils. Their role is to advice social workers and personal advisers on accommodation and help the young people to make a planned move into suitable accommodation.

**Contact** marsha.blake@stbasils.org.uk

While the existence of specific fora for young people leaving care is important, these young people should also have an opportunity to be involved with more generic opportunities to influence accommodation, e.g. youth homelessness consultation events or surveys.

**Practice example**

**Staffordshire** is a two-tier area which has approximately 55 young people leaving care each year. Staffordshire developed a ‘Forum for us’, which had regular meetings for young people in or leaving care, giving them a voice on specific issues. Staffordshire’s Children In Care Council (CICC) co-ordinated by The Children and Young People’s Voice Project now fulfils this role. The group at present has ten young people who attend on a regular basis and are very active covering issues which young people in and leaving care want to address.

**Contact** richard.hancock@staffordshire.gov.uk

Leaving care managers should ensure that young people have opportunities to influence the strategic development of accommodation both as care leavers and as part of the generic group of young people in their area, e.g. participation in mapping exercises, responding to consultations, attending youth councils, annual reporting back to lead members on behalf or care experienced young people etc.
allowing care leavers access to the whole project would increase the accommodation choices for care leavers;

by exposing care leavers to other young people who have to undertake activities, e.g. claiming benefits and paying bills, would increase care leavers’ understanding of what skills are required to live independently;

all the organisations commissioned to provide services within the pathway had a track record of working with care leavers.

The Pathways Project is commissioned through nine third sector providers and one internal provider. 358 units are provided in 37 separate properties. The Project is expected to provide accommodation for 30 16/17 year-old care leavers per year, and currently there are between 70–80 care leavers in the Pathway Project (40 of whom are 18 years old and above).

The project has three 24-hour assessment services, each containing an emergency bed, where young people can be placed, e.g. if a placement has broken down. Care leavers do not have to use the assessment centre and can be referred into accommodation appropriate to their needs. The provision comprises hostels, shared housing, flats and bedsits, and includes specific provision for those with mental health disability, women only and teenage parents. Camden is in the process of developing a specialised service for young people with complex needs. Provision also includes training flats, specific services for 16/17 year-olds, services for young people in education or training, 24-hour supported schemes and schemes that enable the young person to live more independently and experience holding a tenancy. The integration of the Pathway Plan with the support plan is currently being investigated to streamline the referral process.

(cont. overleaf)
Young people remain in the Pathways Project until they are able to live independently, approximately for two years. The Pathway Project can move young people from less to more supported accommodation if the young person is not managing. When care leavers are ready to move on they are given the points required to bid for a one bedroom or studio flat through choice based letting.

The project is quality assured through the Supporting People contracting arrangements and providers are all expected to deliver services up to level B standard of the Quality Assessment Framework (QAF). The services are monitored against the contracting requirements via the Supporting People workbooks and outcomes monitoring when young people exit the services.

Key criteria for success

- The stakeholders all signed up for the project and the joint funding ensured that there was a joint commitment to the success of the project.
- The providers were on board from the beginning. As services were remodelled to meet current need, providers were not in competition with each other and all had something to contribute to the project.
- There were regular joint meetings between those funding the project and those being commissioned to deliver the service. The meetings also enabled other organisations, e.g. the PCT, Connexions, substance misuse services, youth offending teams and community safety to be involved, and for their specialist resources to be used by providers.
- Providers are willing to take those with challenging needs into services that are resourced to provide appropriate levels of support and integrated strategic working within Camden, enabling ‘top up’ funding to be provided and externally using specialist resources, e.g. substance misuse.

Contact keri.deasy@camden.gov.uk

Additional resources and web links

- CLG/DCSF guidance on joint working
  www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/doc/jointworkinghomelessness
- CLG National Youth Homelessness website
  www.communities.gov.uk/youthhomelessness/strategy/beingstrategic/
- NCAS
  www.leavingcare.org website
  www.leavingcare.org/professionals/whoarewe/projects/accommodation/strategic and
  www.leavingcare.org/professionals/products/
- Shelter’s Youth housing strategies: a good practice guide
  england.shelter.org.uk/shop/publications/good_practice/guides/youth_housing_strategies
Chapter summary:

The preparation and planning for living more independently young people receive is as important as the range of accommodation provision.

Introduction

The preparation that young people receive for enjoying the rights, and taking on the responsibilities, of becoming an adult is fundamental. The process that supports young people in the transition to adulthood should establish the right type of accommodation for that young person, at different junctures of this journey. Young people usually receive this guidance and support from their parents and/or family. For young people leaving care it is the responsibility of the local authority, as their corporate parent, to prepare the young person to leave their care placement.

The white paper Care Matters identifies that for young people in care the move to adulthood is often more difficult. Young people in care are expected to take on the responsibilities of being more independent far earlier and far more quickly than their peers, experiencing a compressed and accelerated transition to adulthood. The white paper outlines the Government’s ambition to help young people prepare for adulthood and facilitate young people leaving care at the most appropriate time for them so they are properly prepared and feel ready. It states that social workers should assess the needs of the young person to make a successful transition from care. Those currently supporting the young person, e.g. foster carers and workers in children’s homes, have a key role in equipping care leavers with practical and emotional skills to enable them to make a positive transition to moving on from their placement.

The Office for Children’s Rights Director report found that, although some young people had well-planned preparation, ‘a common theme amongst those young people consulted was in their having remarkably short periods of notice to leave, together with their sheer lack of preparation to do so’.

A common experience for many young people leaving care is insufficient opportunity to develop household or budgeting skills and emotional resilience. When they are discharged from care and are expected to cope with living more independently, it should be no surprise that some young people have problems in maintaining their tenancies or experience other problems. The support the local authority is expected to provide during this process is outlined in legislation, regulation and guidance.

Under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 local authorities must carry out needs assessments, and develop and review plans for care leavers up to the age of 21, or longer if they remain in an approved programme of education and training. One of the main aims of this legislation was to delay the discharge

26 NCAS briefing on Introduction to Leaving Care www.leavingcare.org/data/tmp/5343-10762.pdf
of young people from care until they are prepared and ready to leave, and to improve the assessment, preparation and planning for leaving care.

The legislation states that as looked after children young people must be consulted and should be fully involved in assessment, planning and decision-making arrangements for leaving care.

Pathway planning

Children begin the process of being responsible for themselves at a young age; such milestones as getting dressed and walking to and from school without adult supervision may occur at different junctures for children but commonly take place before teenage years. For younger looked after children their care plan is an organic document that should reflect the gradual transition that leads to children making choices, having control and responsibility. Foster carers and staff in children’s home are key in the process of preparing children and young people to acquire the skills to become confident and successful adults. Social workers are responsible for ensuring that children’s and young people’s care plan outlines what activities are expected from foster carers and workers in children’s homes to support the transition process. As children become young people care planning should take into account the need for young people to acquire the skills and resilience to manage their next accommodation step.

When a looked after child is approaching 16 years of age, within three months of the young person turning 16, the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 requires that the local authority must carry out a thorough assessment of a young person’s needs. This assessment must include a detailed analysis of the extent to which the child possesses the practical and other skills necessary for independent living and their need for care, support and accommodation. This must take place and identify how the young person will be helped to achieve independence. At this stage the care plan that must be in place for every looked after child should develop into the young person’s Pathway Plan, although it could still be referred to as a care plan for young people aged 16 and 17 and who are still a ‘looked after’ child. The age of the young person defines the duties the local authority has in relation to the Pathway Plan. At 16 and 17 the local authority is

Practice example

Barnsley, a unitary authority, has around 15 young people leaving care every year. In Barnsley pathway assessments have a specific accommodation section of the assessment which considers:

- the young person’s current arrangements;
- their practical knowledge;
- awareness of their tenancy rights and responsibilities, including being a good neighbour;
- level of budgeting skills with regard to maintaining a tenancy;
- aspirations as to type of accommodation;
- their ability to access advice on housing.

The assessment is interactive and young people complete it online. The package is designed to reflect the young person’s local area, including the differing types of accommodation options available. The package highlights future tasks together with a designated name for each task.

Contact kathryn.williams@nch.org.uk

27 Children (Leaving Care)(England) Regulations 2001-Reg. 7(4)(e) and (f).
28 See notes 1 and 2 of the ICS Children’s Core Information Requirements LAC Operations flow chart. The young person’s care plan becomes their Pathway Plan when they reach the age of 16 and they become eligible care leavers — young people are unable to be relevant before they are eligible.

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00009/
responsible for preparing and reviewing a young person’s Pathway Plan: when the young person reaches 18, while the Pathway Plan should be maintained and kept under review, it will generally be the local authority’s role to support young adults to access relevant mainstream services — including accommodation.

The Pathway Plan will not only identify the skills the young person needs to develop so that they can acquire the skills necessary to make a successful transition to adulthood. The needs assessment set out in the Pathway Plan should determine the choice of accommodation appropriate to the young person.

‘The Pathway Plan should be pivotal to the process whereby young people map out their future, articulating their aspirations and identifying interim goals along the way to realising their ambitions.’

The process of developing independence continues when the young person has left a care placement and support is offered by other professionals (e.g. housing support workers, supported lodgings hosts, etc.) as well as social workers and personal advisers. The pathway planning process should involve or allow all the people involved in providing support to the young person to input. This can be achieved (subject to the young person’s agreement) by inviting carers, support workers or supported lodging hosts to review meetings, or asking those involved in supporting the young person to submit recommendations or suggestions into pathway planning reviews. Personal advisers and social workers should liaise and communicate regularly with these workers to ensure that the plans are being followed. Social workers have the responsibility for reviewing the plans and ensuring that tasks identified in the plan are being carried out; they are expected to take the necessary decisive action where the plan is not being followed through.

Practice example

The Leaving Care Company (TLCC) is a private provider of housing, support and leaving care services. Staff attend pathway planning meetings of the young person prior to, and during their stay at TLCC. Support staff prepare weekly reports on the support given to the young person, based on daily contact sheets and formal reports are prepared for leaving care services on a monthly basis.

Contact Eva Perkins eva@theleavingcarecompany.co.uk

Local authorities have a varied approach as to how they support young people in acquiring the skills to live independently, accessing suitable accommodation and how their approach links with the pathway planning. The extent to which young people feel in control, engaged and informed will depend on commitment and resources the local authority has invested in this process.

Practice example

Stockton on Tees is a unitary authority with approximately 20 young people leaving care each year. Stockton on Tees ensure that the accommodation co-ordinator is invited to a young person care or Pathway Plan review to advise on how current housing is meeting need, and the future housing plans for the young person. Future plans are discussed, and how they are going to be achieved, and who is instrumental in identifying potential future provision. If the current accommodation is not meeting need action required to remedy this is identified including alternatives. The young person’s opinion on their current and future accommodation needs are sought and family and social networks of the young person are taken into account.

Contact Pat.Grainger@stockton.gov.uk

It is anticipated that new revised statutory guidance to the Children Act, following the Children's and Young Persons Act 2008 will set out the expectation that young people will remain looked after with their care plan being maintained until they are 18 years of age. This recognises the vulnerability of looked after children (including 16—18 year-old care leavers) and the fact that reasonable parents do not expect their children to leave home before they are adult. Eligible care leavers (i.e. looked after) children are entitled to the full support of the looked after system — including scrutiny of their care plan at statutory reviews chaired by Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs). The reality is however that most people will leave their care placement around the time that they reach legal adulthood at age 18 unless their foster placement is converted to supported lodgings.  

Key issues for care leavers

Care leavers are not an homogenous group of young people and each young person will have needs and aspirations unique to them. Preparation and planning must therefore be personalised. Young people will achieve better outcomes if they leave care when they are ready emotionally and practically to make the transition to more independent living. The White Paper *Time for Change* stresses the importance of personalisation, and states that ‘no local authority should be able to make a significant change, such as a move from a care placement to so called ‘independent’ accommodation, without both the proposal being rigorously scrutinised under the established care planning process and the child confirming that they understand the implications of any proposed change and positively agree.’  

As part of the White Paper the government introduced Right2Bcared4 pilots in 11 local authority areas. The pilots aim to ensure that the care leaving process is genuinely responsive to the needs of the young person concerned, so that they only leave care when they are ready after they have been properly prepared.

*S* Children’s services should ensure that young people have the right to remain in foster care, children’s home or other ‘regulated’ setting until they feel ready to leave and are prepared to move to a suitable accommodation option.

*S* Children’s services should ensure that young people make the decision to leave care free from undue influence until they are aged 18 years of age.

*P* Social workers should ensure that a young person’s choice of accommodation is informed by their current needs and preferences and future aspirations as set out in their pathway plan.

**Practice example**

**Essex** is a two-tier area with over 100 young people leaving care every year. Young care leavers in Essex have developed a ‘welcome pack’. The welcome pack contains information about the leaving care teams, housing, education and training opportunities, including leaflets on options and skills required to move on, accommodation types, and tenancy management.  

**Contact** gemma.hammond@essex.gov.uk.

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30 See later section on foster care conversion and the DCSF staying put pilots.
Social workers should recognise that some young people have additional or specific needs, which should be addressed in the accommodation element of the Pathway Plan. Disabled young people, young people from some ethnic minorities, young parents, young people placed out of the borough or the authority, young people in custody and unaccompanied asylum seekers are amongst those groups that will require specific housing and support solutions.

Young people’s success in being responsible for themselves depends on the preparation they have been given over a sustained period of time. Foster carers and staff in residential homes have the most significant role in this work. The transition to adulthood is a very turbulent time and requires young people to make choices, experiment, take and manage incremental risks. For some young people their care placement offers a risk averse environment; they are simply not invited or allowed to take on tasks that will enable them to be responsible for themselves. Although there are a range of tools available to leaving care teams, foster carers, children’s homes staff and housing/support providers that can be used to support young people in acquiring the practical and emotional skills necessary for more independent living, use of these resources is patchy.

NCAS’s *Preparation for Adult Life training and resource pack* (for workers) and the *Get Ready for Adult Life young people’s pack* are designed to support the transition process for care leavers as they move towards adulthood. These can be downloaded from [www.leavingcare.org](http://www.leavingcare.org). NCAS can offer training for staff, delivered with young people, on the pack. Contact ncas@catch-22.org.uk

Shelter’s *A new tomorrow* is designed to address vulnerable young care leavers’ emotional development when moving to independent accommodation for the first time. The pack offers professionals the opportunity to choose from a range of thought-provoking individual and group activities. The pack includes an audio CD, featuring songs written and performed by young people, sharing their experiences of moving on. This can be purchased from [www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk).

Leaving care managers should ensure that the fostering service supports foster carers, and that services provided in children’s homes enable children and young people to become incrementally responsible for themselves. Processes should be in place to ensure that foster carers and children’s homes staff are trained, supervised and supported in how to support young people in acquiring the practical skills and emotional resilience to be responsible for themselves.

Leaving care managers should ensure that the fostering services’ recruitment of foster carers and commissioning of private fostering arrangements, address the requirement of carers to support children and young people in acquiring the skills to be responsible for themselves.

Leaving care managers should ensure that services commissioned or provided by children’s homes, clearly outlines the requirements of staff to support children and young people in acquiring the skills to be responsible for themselves.

Leaving care managers and housing/support providers should utilise the tools available and build them into the support and pathway planning processes they use.
Foster care workers should plan with the foster carer and children’s home staff the activities that will lead to children and young people being responsible for themselves and how risks from these activities can be identified and managed. For a child it may be dressing themselves and the risk being they may not wear appropriate clothing for the weather, for young people it may be preparing a meal and the risk being they may burn themselves.

Checklist for developing the accommodation element of a Pathway Plan:

- Enable young people to feel in control of their housing options.
- Provide appropriate and timely information about the choices available to them in their area.
- Assist young people in identifying the important elements of their future accommodation, so that they are able to prioritise among the choices available to them, and understand the implications of their choices.
- Allow for a gradual, staged transition if possible, taking into consideration other events that may be occurring in that young person’s life, e.g. exams.
- Identify an alternative strategy if the young person’s first choice is not available or becomes inappropriate.
- Establish a contingency plan if there is a placement breakdown, which allows a return to a more supportive environment.
- Listen to the young person’s concerns and fears and support them in identifying strategies to overcome these.
- Remember that establishing emotional resilience required for living more independently is as important as acquiring practical skills.

Practice example

The NCAS accommodation project facilitated a group of young people in developing an accommodation tool. The tool provides accessible information so young people leaving care can be better informed about their accommodation options, and consequently take more control of this element of their pathway planning.

Contact sue.baxter@catch-22.org.uk

Young people’s needs are not static and can change (sometimes at short notice) as a young person experiences becoming more responsible for themselves. The Pathway Plan should be an organic document and should be kept under regular review. Such reviews should also take place in response to planned or actual significant changes to arrangements for supporting the young person, e.g. it will be important to convene a review of the Pathway Plan whenever there are concerns that young people are unable to manage their accommodation and may, as a result, be threatened with eviction.

Social workers should review a young person’s Pathway Plan if they lose or are in danger of losing their accommodation.
**Good practice case study**

**Bradford** is a unitary authority with approximately 60 young people leaving care every year. Bradford has a transitions programme called ‘smooth it out’ which runs alongside the leaving care service with input from the looked after team. The program comprises 18 sessions for young people, nine issues based, e.g. budgeting, and nine leisure and activities based, e.g. canoeing. A housing options session looks at the choices of accommodation available to care leavers and enables young people to have an opportunity to speak to housing providers.

The leaving care team also identified the need for a specific training course to support young people to acquire the practical and emotional skills required to manage a tenancy agreement. The pre-tenancy training has been devised and is delivered by the leaving care team and Foundation Housing who are a third sector provider of housing related support and supported housing management in Bradford.

The 12-week course is currently available for young people leaving care and those who have not been able to maintain a tenancy in their first attempts at independent living. The course is accredited by the Open College Network to NVQ level 1. Young people are expected to attend two sessions a week for the duration of the course and will be entitled to the education maintenance allowance. Young people also receive more currency for their application to the Bradford Choice Based Letting Scheme. The course uses the care leavers’ training flat, so all participants have an opportunity to stay in the flat overnight. The course has been developed with an input from a young person and young people are invited to co-facilitate sessions. The course comprises key components based on the five elements of Every Child Matters, but also allows for sessions that will enable the training to be unique to those attending, based on their pathway plan. The course utilises NCAS’s *Preparation for adult life* exercises.

**Contact** janet.hadi@bradford.gov.uk

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**Additional resources and web links**

- NCAS leaving care.org
  [www.leavingcare.org/professionals/products/](http://www.leavingcare.org/professionals/products/)
- Children (Leaving Care)(England) Regulations 2001
  [www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2001/20012874.htm](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2001/20012874.htm)
- [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk)
- Young people’s views on leaving care
  [www.rights4me.org/content/beheardreports/6/leaving_care_report.pdf](http://www.rights4me.org/content/beheardreports/6/leaving_care_report.pdf)
- Shelter *A new tomorrow*
  [england.shelter.org.uk/shop/publications/educational/a_new_tomorrow](http://england.shelter.org.uk/shop/publications/educational/a_new_tomorrow)

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Section 3: Pathway planning and preparation
Chapter summary:
The majority of care leavers are still in contact with their families who can be instrumental in supporting them to make the transition to adulthood.

Introduction
Young people leaving care are often part of extensive family and friends networks. Many young people when they leave care will have contact with some of these members. One study found 80 percent of young people were in contact with family members after leaving care. At present there is little evidence from recent research about the nature, quality and impact on young people of these contacts. Transition from care can be a time when relationships may be re-established or renegotiated and is certainly a time when the possible risks and benefits from renewed contact with birth families need careful consideration. Identity issues may be especially pertinent at this time and so support for young people in managing their relationships is crucial.

Key issues for care leavers
One study examined the role of extended families in the leaving care process. It found that most young people preparing to leave care could name someone who was important in their lives and who they felt they could turn to for advice. However, more than half of the social workers were not aware of who this was. The research also found that the people important to young people do not always attend their planning review or know what the young person is entitled to. Yet the study showed that family contact and support after care was usually of benefit to young people, especially in the period directly after leaving care, although the level of involvement tended to reflect the quality of contact as young people approached leaving care.

Whilst many care leavers have contact with their family or friends, a number of young people return to live with their families. Return to live with family can affect eligibility for services under the Children (Leaving Care) Act. If a young person aged 16 or 17 returns home successfully to a parent or someone with parental responsibility for a continuous period of six months then they will no longer be treated as a ‘relevant child’. A review should take place at least six months after the return to assess if it is successful and, if so, the young person’s status would change and they would become a ‘qualifying child’. However, if a child returns home, but is still on a care order, the child remains an eligible child until the care order is discharged by a court, if the young person reaches 18 then the care order ends. For ‘qualifying children’ the local authority does have a power to advise and assist, but there would not be any statutory duty to maintain the Pathway Plan.

Government statistics show 12 percent of care leavers at age 19 living with parents or relatives.

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33 Leaving Care in Partnership: family involvement with care leavers, Peter Marsh and Mark Peel, published by the Stationery Office, 1999.
34 See section 1 for the definition of eligible, relevant and former relevant children.
35 www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000810_FinalSFRTablesOctober.xls
Little is known about the support young people receive from their leaving care team and how well they get on. More research is needed to find out more and to identify support needs.

Exploring ways to ensure care leavers develop some kind of safe and appropriate family or friends’ relationships should be a priority for leaving care teams.

Directors of children’s services need to ensure that local practices on young people’s contact with birth families is based upon sound assessment of need and risk for each young person and is monitored via the Pathway Plan review process.

Leaving care managers should ensure that care plans and Pathway Plans include a section on young people’s relationships with their birth and extended families, and when appropriate, young people should be supported to re-establish, repair or maintain these relationships.

A young person’s definition of family and friends can include a wide range of people. In order to facilitate both positive contact and return home for young people, leaving care workers need to know who is important to that young person and understand the young person’s views of who they want to involve in planning and how. Local authorities should identify what support is required by young people and their families and friends though the pathway planning process.

There is a statutory requirement for children’s services to maintain reasonable contact between looked after children and their families.

Social workers should identify the support a young person could receive from their family and friends in making the transition to living more independently, in line with a young person’s needs and risk assessment of the contact. This could be achieved through social activities and visiting funds.

Top tips:

- Establish with the young person ‘who is family’ and help them to think about who is most important in their life.
- Work with the young person to develop a clear, up to date, and full family tree.
- Life story work may be an opportunity for young people to look back and explore their past. It could help young people to resolve separation issues and identify and understand both negative and positive aspects of family life. It should be done in a fun and enjoyable way.
- Make sure meetings are flexible enough to be family-oriented and look at support can offer.
- Developments in youth homelessness sector around family mediation may offer learning to leaving care teams.

Additional resources and web links

- NCAS resources
  www.leavingcare.org/professionals/practice_database/preparation_and_care_planning
- A journey home — Who Cares trust
  www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk/publications.htm
- Family mediation
  - Alone in London
    www.als.org.uk/subpages/02fmed.htm
  - National youth homelessness scheme
    Communities and Local Government
    www.communities.gov.uk/youthhomelessness/prevention/mediation/voluntarysector/casestudy14/
- www.communities.gov.uk/youthhomelessness/prevention/mediation/trainingneeds/casestudy12
Chapter summary:
Training flats enable young people to receive support in identifying strategies to manage the practical and emotional demands of living more independently, without compromising their future housing options.

Introduction

Training flats offer an opportunity for young people to experience independence and be supported in acquiring the skills to live independently. For some young people, living more independently offers them freedom, privacy and control, but they are often unprepared for the responsibility, loneliness and isolation this entails. A stay in a supported training flat can support the young person in identifying strategies to cope with loneliness.

Local authorities and housing providers have adopted a variety of approaches to training flats. Two main models are emerging. One aims to give young people a taste of independence, while they remain in and return to their care placement. The second offers young people the opportunity to experience independence in a supported environment before they move to a more independent setting. For the purpose of this guide we will refer to the former as taster flats and latter as transition flats.

The most important aspect of training flats is that staff are on hand, sometimes 24 hours a day, to support the young people in managing the responsibilities of living independently and cope with the emotional demands. For some local authorities the stay in the training flat is linked to a pre-tenancy training course.

Taster flats

These are available to young people who are currently in a care placement. When it is identified that young people are considering their move from care, the training flat can provide a useful opportunity for both the young person and the staff to assess the independent living skills acquired thus far and what areas need to improved. The length of stay is time limited. In some areas it can be less than a week, often with an opportunity for a return visit, in other areas young people can stay up to six weeks.

The cost of providing this opportunity is the rent of the flat, utility bills, an allowance to the young people and the support that is provided. Local authorities who utilise this type of accommodation usually only have one or two flats of this nature and these are often sourced from local housing department provision.

Some of the local authorities who have been awarded Right2Bcared4Pilots (outlined in section three) have used part of the monies to fund taster flats.

Transition flats

These differ from taster flats in that the young people are not expected to return to their care placement once they leave the transition flat, but move on to more independent accommodation. They enable the young person to experience living more independently with the support of staff.

They are usually characterised by offering:

- self contained accommodation;
- a time limited stay, but usually for a longer period than the taster flats;
● a move from a more supportive arrangement but can also offer an opportunity for a young person who has failed to live more independently and requires more support or has a missing skill set;

● the opportunity to experience the challenges of independent living, and the potential tenancy failure, without this having an impact on future housing options (e.g. being found intentionally homeless).

Key issues for care leavers

The statutory responsibility of providing accommodation to care leavers and the lack of appropriate housing means, that there is an enormous pressure on accommodation immediately accessible if a placement for a young person breaks down. Training flats are a valuable resource, yet there is a danger that they may be used as emergency accommodation, rather than for their intended purpose. It may be appropriate for a young person who has not managed in more independent accommodation to have a stay in a training flat, but this must be part of their care planning process.

The use of the training flat should be dictated by the leaving care manager and policies and procedures drawn up to ensure that it is only used for its intended purpose. Other arrangements must be in place to access accommodation for placement breakdown.

Effective preparation for adult life is an incremental process that begins when the young person is in their care placement and continues with support when they are living more independently. A stay in a training flat can be an experiential part of the process of the young person becoming responsible for themselves, but it should never be seen as the complete training package.

A planned stay in a training flat should be preceded by work by leaving care workers, foster carers or children’s homes workers with that young person to acquire the skills to live more independently.

The young person should only be referred when it is deemed appropriate by the staff supporting that young person and the young person themselves.

When a young person stays in a training flat ability to manage living more independently should be assessed by their social worker as part of the pathway planning process and the personnel supporting them while they are in the flat, the stay should inform the decision about their next accommodation option.

When in a taster flat, at the end of their stay, the young person and the personnel supporting them should assess what the young person was able to manage and which areas required more work. This should inform the care planning of their transition to adulthood when the young person returns to their care placement.

The leaving care manager should ideally link the use of the training flat to an accredited training package around independent or tenancy management skills (e.g. ASDAN, Open College Network). Young people can then use both the training and the stay to evidence their ability to manage in securing move-on accommodation.

The two types of training flats are not mutually exclusive, because they perform different functions. The taster flat enables the young person to reflect on their experience within the security of their care placement, whereas the transition flat enables a young person to live more independently with support before moving onto other accommodation.

Directors of children’s services should consider developing both models to meet the needs of young people at different stages of the transition to independence.
Practice example

Plymouth is a unitary authority with approximately 35 young people leaving care each year. Plymouth has used Right2BCared4 pilot funding to develop a taster flat which can be used for stays of up to six weeks by children in care placements. Plymouth also rent a number of flats from private landlords to use as training flats, which aim to provide a bridge into more independent accommodation. Young people will be able to use both types of provision in the transition to more independent accommodation.

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The cost of residential placements may lead to local authorities finding it difficult to justify offering taster flats to young people, while the local authority is still financing their residential placement. In some areas this has led to taster flats only being offered to those in foster care. The cost of a stay in a taster flat is simply the rent, the utilities and the personal allowance paid to the young person. This cost will remain the same whether the young person is in a foster or residential placement. However, if this option is not available to those in residential placement, the local authority will still continue to pay for that placement, the young person may be less prepared to move out of their care placement and more vulnerable to tenancy breakdown at a later stage.

Directors of children’s services should ensure that the taster flat option should be available to all young people in care, regardless of their care placement status.

Young people report that one of the challenging areas of living more independently is managing on a limited budget for all of their needs, having come from care placements where everything, from food to toilet paper, is provided. One of the other difficulties for young people is the isolation and loneliness that can be experienced when living alone. While there are merits in residential accommodation developing more independent accommodation, these cannot fulfil the need for a taster flat experience that replicates reality. It is important that the flat reflects a realistic view of what more independent living would entail.

- Leaving care managers should ensure the training flat replicates reality. Young people should be given an allowance that mirrors what they would receive if they were in low paid employment, at college and/or on benefits. If possible, they should be expected to pay their own utility bills, purchase their own food, household items and toiletries.

- Leaving care managers should ensure the training flat reflects the standards, location and facilities of the accommodation they are likely to move onto, e.g. the white goods, floor coverings, decoration the young person can expect.

- Leaving care managers should ensure that the stay at the training flat is not supervised 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The young person should have an opportunity to experience staying alone so they can be supported in developing strategies in managing that, which will not compromise future accommodation.

- The social worker or supporting personnel should get the young person to sign a legally binding agreement when moving into the accommodation that reflect the rights and responsibilities of living in more independent accommodation, e.g. what repairs they could expect to be carried out and in what time frame; how they are expected to behave (noise, nuisance); reporting repairs; being responsible for visitors; not damaging fixtures and fittings.

Some local authorities cover a wide geographical area and young people may be linked into services, college and employment.
in their local area. To ensure that the training flats give a true indication of more independent living it is important that the young people can continue their daytime activities.

When the leaving care manager is establishing a training flat, specific thought needs to be given to its location so that it is sited centrally or close to good transport links and away from high risk social areas.

Good practice case study

Bournemouth is a unitary authority which has approximately ten young people leaving care each year. Bournemouth operates an accommodation pathway consisting of a taster flat, 16 supported lodging host providers, eight registered housing association tenancies, access to a range of hostel and shared supported housing, foyer and private sector leased properties.

The training flat enables young people 16+, currently living in residential or foster placements or supported housing, to experience living independently for a period up to three weeks then go back to their placement and reflect on their experience. The flat is situated in a block of local authority flats in an environment that has been specifically chosen due to its proximity to transport links and shops.

Young people are referred if they and their lead professional have identified that this would be a valuable experience, as the young person has shown an interest in moving to independent accommodation. There is an agreed referral process, which involves an individual support package being agreed with support from foster carers, supported lodgings carers, other professionals and the young person’s family where appropriate. The young person is issued with a licence agreement, which in part mirrors the responsibilities a young person would be expected to adhere to in independent accommodation.

The young person is expected to produce a portfolio of their learning through undertaking living skills during their stay. This portfolio is used to further develop learning on return to the placement and provide evidence of ability to live independently to any prospective landlord when the young person fully accesses independent accommodation.

The flat is funded by Children’s social care (the pathway service of the looked after children’s team) through the Right2BCared4 pilot which pays the rent and the young person’s allowance, which is equivalent to job seeker’s allowance.

The young person is expected to use this money to pay for living costs, food, toiletries and utilities, e.g. the electricity requires money being placed on a charge key. The flat aims to take 12 referrals per year and young people can split their stay, having a week initially then returning for a further three weeks at a later stage.

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Additional resources and web links

- NCAS resources
  www.leavingcare.org/professionals/whoarewe/projects/accommodation/operational/trainingflats
Chapter summary:
Supported lodgings allow young people to acquire the life skills for living more independently in a supportive domestic setting.

Introduction
There is no agreed definition of ‘supported lodgings’, however most schemes share these common elements:

- They provide supported accommodation for vulnerable people who require support to live more independently.
- The accommodation is provided by private individuals (‘hosts’) who offer a space in their home.
- The host provides a level of support as well as accommodation.
- Hosts, and in some cases the vulnerable person, are provided with support from an external body who manages the provision.

There are two different types of supported lodging provision for care leavers — foster placement conversions and stand alone supported lodging provision. Some schemes manage both sets of provision.

Foster placement conversions
Once a young person reaches their 18th birthday they are no longer looked after as defined by the Children Act 1989 and their placement cannot be classified as a foster placement. The most common arrangement for those who are supported to stay on with their foster carers is to convert the placement into supported lodgings. This does not apply where the young person has enduring care needs that require them to remain in a supported placement into adulthood. In this case the most appropriate arrangement is for the foster carer to become an approved adult placement (shared lives) carer.

There is a general recognition that young people who have experienced stability in their foster placements would benefit from staying in those placements until they are ready to leave. The White Paper *Time for Change* states that ‘Young people in foster care can develop strong relationships and emotional attachments with those who care for them, and young people told us that they wanted to have the option to stay with foster carers where such relationships and attachments have developed.’

Practical example
**Durham** is a unitary authority with approximately 35 young people leaving care each year. Durham has a supported lodging scheme that can currently house 45 young people. When the scheme was set up in 2003 it comprised 15 foster care conversions and was funded by supporting people for care leavers who were aged 18. The scheme now manages both foster care conversions and stand alone supported lodgings for looked after children and children in need aged 16 and 17, and care leavers aged 18 and above.

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36 The placement becomes a registered scheme covered by the Adult Placement Schemes (England) Regulations 2004 [www.naaps.co.uk](http://www.naaps.co.uk/)
Local authorities have been developing ways to support conversions of foster placements to supported lodgings in order to facilitate this process for some time. As part of the White Paper the government introduced Staying Put pilots in ten local authority areas for young people who have established familial relationships with their foster carers to continue to stay with them up to the age of 21. It is anticipated that the findings from these pilots will influence national policy and local practice.

**Stand alone supported lodgings provision**

Young people can also move into a new supported lodging placement, which may be specifically for care leavers or open to all vulnerable young people. It should be noted however, if a 16 or 17 year-old looked-after child is placed in a supported lodging scheme, the placement is likely to meet the definition of fostering.\(^{37}\)

Stand alone supported lodging can be categorised into emergency provision in response to a crisis, e.g. a placement breakdown, and longer term placements. The former provides a safe space while a longer term solution can be found and is often for a few nights or a couple of weeks. The latter aims to enable a young person to gain the practical and emotional skills to live more independently and so will be longer term, usually two or three years.

Longer term supported lodgings provision has been identified as a positive placement for young people in the transition to adulthood. It enables a young person to enter a domestic environment as an adult, and have the support of the host, working jointly with professionals to enable the young person to experientially acquire life skills. It can be particularly useful when there are limited supported housing schemes in an area, and can avoid young people having to move out of area to access accommodation with support.

In order to develop and manage any supported lodgings, schemes have been set up to:

- recruit, vet, train and support hosts;
- assess accommodation;
- match hosts with young people;
- provide any additional support to the young person;
- manage any difficulties or emergencies.

These schemes are usually managed directly by local authorities or the third sector organisations. Although some supported lodgings providers have a considerable number of hosts the majority of schemes comprise small numbers.

**Funding**

There are two distinct funding requirements for supported lodgings schemes. There is a cost related to the host providing the accommodation (room, utilities, and household goods), the support and any meals. In addition to this there is a cost of managing a scheme, e.g. recruiting hosts etc.

**Practice example**

**Stonham** in Hampshire currently provide supported lodgings for over 60 young people, around 24 of whom are care leavers. The scheme has been established for over ten years and manages both stand alone and foster care conversions. The funding is provided by the leaving care service, Supporting People and rent which is eligible for housing benefit. The staff support both the host and the young person.

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Key issues for care leavers

Supporting lodgings schemes have proved to be successful in improving outcomes for young people. The Supporting People data shows that significantly more young people in supported lodgings achieve positive outcomes around maintaining their accommodation and avoiding eviction, learning and work, and participating in social activities. Yet there are only a small number of schemes available. In 2008 DCSF figures showed that at 19 only 9 percent of care leavers lived in supported lodgings. At the same time supported lodgings are only suitable for a certain number of young people. Research data identifies supported lodgings as most suitable for those young people who are willing and able to:

- ‘Engage to some degree with individuals (particularly their host) and with social frameworks such as education
- Regulate their behaviour to accommodate house rules
- Turn a desire for a sustainable and satisfying adult life into activities which will promote this outcome.’

Given the positive outcomes regarding education for young people in supported lodgings, young people at school and college may particularly benefit from this type of placement. If a young person’s foster placement has broken down, this does not mean that they will be unable to manage in an independent supported lodgings placement. It will be important to highlight the difference in the placement and that they will be going into the accommodation as an adult, with the rights and responsibilities this will entail.

Practice example

Leeds is a unitary authority with approximately 120 young people leaving care each year. Leeds made a decision to re-designate foster care placements as post-18 placements, where the young person requested it and the host agreed. Leeds now has evidence, through their financial systems and reports for extended funding arrangements, that the number of young people remaining in placement has increased.

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Social workers should consider a supported lodging placement for all young people in education, and where possible the young person should be matched to the most appropriate host near their place of study.

Any placements should be based on an assessment by the social worker of the young person’s skills and capacity to manage in that environment.

Social workers should not assume that young people with particular support needs, e.g. mental health, will not be able to manage in a supported lodgings placement.

39 www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000810/FinalSFRTablesoct.xls#’G1’!A1
The cost of foster care (or supporting lodgings) for care leavers under 18 is met by children’s services as part of their statutory duties under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. This changes when the young person reaches 18. In the majority of cases the young person is expected to pay a rental element and the support may still be paid for by children’s services or may be funded by Supporting People. This can cause confusion to the foster carer or host and the young person, who may not understand why the arrangement for the placement has to change.

Leaving care managers should have policies and procedures that enable their staff to be clear with foster carers about why a placement is converted to supported lodgings at the age of 18, and the implications of this change in the funding they will receive.

Leaving care managers should have policies and procedures that minimise the disruption to foster carers of the change to supported lodgings

Practice example

Devon is a two-tier area with approximately 90 young people leaving care each year. In order to support foster care conversions Devon leaving care team are negotiating an arrangement with their district authorities where the housing benefit is paid to the leaving care team. Although the young person has to make a housing benefit claim, the leaving care team are able to continue the placement on similar terms to the fostering arrangement.

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The philosophy of supported lodgings post-18 is different to foster care, in that the young person is an adult, albeit living in a familial domestic setting. Society expects adults to be responsible for themselves and the choices they make. This presents fewer problems in stand alone supported lodgings schemes, where providers can be clear that the young person is a member of the household, not the family. In foster care conversions managing this change can be more of an issue, e.g., young people as adults can make choices regarding consuming alcohol and staying away from their home overnight. At the same time they can be expected to be responsible for feeding themselves, getting from A to B and laundering their clothes. There can be no set guidance on how this change is managed, as each young person’s experiences will be different, depending on the ethos of their foster placement.

There are also some practical differences to manage, e.g.:

- The change in funding the host and young person can expect in terms of source and amount: the young person would be expected to pay a charge for their accommodation and food for which they may be expected to claim welfare benefits, or pay from their wages if working.
- Foster carers will not continue to receive a clothing allowance to pass on to the young person; the young person will be expected to fund any clothing from their benefit or wage.
- The support the carer and young person receive from children’s services may change, e.g. some support may be provided by a specific supported lodging scheme.
- If the young person stays in supported lodgings until age 21 they may find it more difficult to access social housing, as care leavers are often only given priority to accessing access social housing up until age 21. Some local authorities also have arrangements between children’s services and housing departments that young people are given priority under choice based lettings for a limited period from their 18th birthday which acts as a disincentive for care leavers to stay in foster care conversions or take up supported lodgings.
Leaving care managers should ensure there is specific support/training/supervision for foster carers who are converting to supported lodgings. The training/support/supervision should include the change in philosophy and the practical changes this involves.

Practice example

Middlesbrough is a unitary authority with approximately 25 young people leaving care each year. If young people wish to remain in their present foster placement, then the placement is transferred into supported lodgings on their 18th birthday for a period of up to two years. Middlesbrough has a specific accommodation worker to support foster carers regarding this transition.

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The social worker should identify in the care plan if this is the preferred option for the young person (and if this is possible in the placement) at the earliest opportunity, identifying the support that is to be given to the young person in managing this transition.

Social workers should provide a draft agreement that the young person and the carer can use to agree expectations of both parties, including payment for food, utilities and toiletries.

Children’s service directors should negotiate with housing directors that young people are able to register on the local authority housing register at age 16, but their application is only activated and priority status given when they are ready to live completely independently, which for those who remain in foster care conversions or take up supported lodgings could be age 21 or later.

There are financial implications for hosts offering supported lodgings for young adults. For those converting from foster care the arrangements the financial arrangements are different from fostering. Local practice varies widely. Some leaving care teams ensure foster care conversions receive the same allowance rate as in foster placements, others pay a lower rate and, in some cases, leaving care teams rely on the young person paying for their own accommodation and food, claiming benefits when relevant, and support is transferred to Supporting People funded schemes. Providing supported lodgings placements also impact on tax liabilities and can affect the host’s benefit entitlements.

Practice example

The Staying Put pilots are enabling ten local authority areas to have an opportunity to identify the obstacles to foster care being converted to supported lodgings and develop solutions.

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When recruiting foster carers the foster service manager should ensure that the information given to the potential carer, outlines the possibility of the placement being converted to a supported lodging when the young person is 18, and the financial implications of this.

For foster care conversions, the fostering service worker, in conjunction with the social worker, should be supporting the host by identifying what income the host can expect, and help them understand their new tax and benefit entitlement position.

The young person should be supported by the social worker in understanding what contribution they will be expected to make and how their income can be maximised, including advice on applying for benefit where appropriate.

41 See footnote 37.
Independent fostering agencies may be reluctant to accept a reduction in the placement fees that they receive as a consequence of a foster home providing continuing support for a young person to stay put from age 18. Whether or not it will be possible for a young person from care to leave foster care in the same way as other young people leaving home, will need to be taken into consideration whenever foster placements are commissioned for older looked after children.

When commissioning and reviewing arrangements with independent fostering agencies, leaving care managers should be negotiating that foster care conversions be transferred into their, or a third sector, supported lodgings schemes.

Leaving care managers need to negotiate with the private fostering agencies the differences in expectation of supported lodgings. The host is no longer ‘looking after’ the young person, but is providing them with support to live more independently, and there are cost implications associated with this.

Supported lodgings schemes require the hosts to have a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. In foster placements, and usually in supported lodgings, all adults in the household are required to have a CRB check. If young people stay in a foster care conversion or take up supported lodgings they may have to have a CRB check if there are other foster children and/or young people under the age of 18 in that household.

While it is unlikely that the CRB check reveals information that would jeopardise that young person’s continuing stay in the placement, the social worker should ensure that there is a contingency plan if the results mean that the young person is required to move.

In generic supported lodgings schemes it may be difficult to recruit people who have the skills to deal with care leavers, understand the issues they face and the role of leaving care services. There is research to show care leavers who have experienced broken attachments may exhibit behaviour hosts may find difficult, e.g. overreliance on, or a reluctance to become familiar with, the host. In supported lodgings the host and the provider of the scheme will be expected to work alongside those with a statutory duty to provide services.

In generic schemes, managers should ensure the assessment, induction, support and training of hosts should include the specific skills required to work with care leavers. Leaving care teams should be prepared to contribute to these processes.

Leaving care managers should ensure that there is a clear process for communicating information between the host, the provider and the leaving care team, as the host will be best placed to identify problems relating to the young person at an early stage.

Given the unique relationship between the host and the young person, leaving care managers should have arrangements that enable the host to input, or be part of, LAC reviews or pathway planning.

Managers of services should ensure any support planning process used by hosts and providers links and is aligned to the Pathway Plan.
**Good practice case study**

**Young Devon** is a voluntary organisation that provides supported lodgings for young people across the South West. The scheme started as provision for care leavers, but now accepts other young people and is funded by Supporting People monies. Young Devon currently has 150 placements available through 100 hosts and accepts referrals for young people who are care leavers, children in need or homeless. Approximately half the young people are care leavers.

Young Devon recruits hosts in a number of ways, including radio and poster advertisements. Word of mouth from existing hosts has been very successful. The assessment is based on fostering assessment guidelines. Hosts are CRB checked, have medical checks and have references taken up before being interviewed. The final decision is taken by a panel similar to a fostering panel which includes representatives from social services and Young Devon’s service manager. A full five-day training programme is provided for hosts, which includes specific training on the needs of care leavers delivered by care experienced young people.

Young people are referred by the housing department or social services and referrals can only be taken through one of these routes. Referral forms include a risk assessment.

All of the scheme’s staff are based in youth advice centres in the area they work in. In these centres there are a variety of services under one roof, this enables the workers to link up with other services easily.

Young Devon has found it essential to have separate workers to support hosts and young people as it reduces any potential for conflict of interest. The different roles have very different tasks and therefore require different skills. Young Devon is also funded to provide floating support when the young person moves into their move-on accommodation.

Support and communication to hosts, including the opportunity to make contact with other hosts to discuss issues and receive informal support, has helped with the retention of hosts.

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**Additional resources and web links**

- **NCAS resources**
  [www.leavingcare.org/professionals/whobrewe/projects/accommodation/operational](http://www.leavingcare.org/professionals/whobrewe/projects/accommodation/operational)

- **Fostering network**
  [www.fostering.net/activities/england/lodgings.php](http://www.fostering.net/activities/england/lodgings.php)

- **National Youth Homelessness scheme** — Communities and Local Government

- **NAAPS UK practice guidance document** Transition and Mixed Child-Adult Placements
  [www.naaps.org.uk](http://www.naaps.org.uk)
Chapter summary:
For a significant number of care leavers supported housing can provide an opportunity to live more independently and receive support to acquire life skills.

Introduction
Supported housing can offer young people leaving care an opportunity to live in an independent setting while supported to acquire and or maintain life skills. This can provide an invaluable bridge onto settled accommodation and allow the young person to experience the challenges of living more independently, be supported with areas of difficulty and experientially acquire skills that can enable them to manage in the future.

Supported accommodation is an umbrella term which is applied to a whole range of housing based solutions for vulnerable people. It can be provided by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), voluntary organisations and private providers. Some local authority social service departments provide their own supported housing provision, e.g. training flats or supported lodgings.

Supported accommodation can be permanent or temporary and funding contracts have meant providers usually designate schemes as either permanent (long stay) or temporary stay (this is usually no more than two years).

Types of supported housing

- **Shared supported housing** — temporary or permanent schemes where service users have their own room but share bathroom, kitchen and other communal areas with other service users. Support is delivered by staff who may have an office in the property or visit on a regular basis.

- **Self contained supported housing** — this is where service users have their own flat or house. It can be in a block or cluster of the same type of provision or dispersed within a locality. Support is provided by staff who may have an office in the block or offer a visiting service. In leaving care services this provision includes training flats (see section six).

- **Hostel** — accommodation where a larger number of service users have their own bedrooms and share communal areas with other service users. Staffing is often provided on a 24-hour basis, seven days a week and meals may be provided.

- **Women’s refuge** — temporary accommodation for women (and their children) who have experienced domestic violence. Women often share a room with their children and share other communal areas with other women and their families. Support is provided by workers sometimes 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

- **Foyers for young people** — temporary accommodation for young people (usually 17–25 years) with support and access to employment, training and education. The accommodation may be shared or self-contained. Support is provided by staff who are usually based on site and may be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
Section 7: Supported housing

- **Teenage parent accommodation** — temporary accommodation specifically for young people (usually aged 17—21 years) who have become, or are about to become parents. Service users often share a room with their babies and share kitchen, bathroom and communal areas with other service users. Support is provided by support workers who have an office on site and may provide 24-hour cover, seven days a week.

- **Supported lodgings** (see section five).

- **Adult placements** — usually commissioned by adult social services for people with enduring care needs. The adult placement services are delivered by host families who provide support care and accommodation usually in their own home.

- **Residential care home** — can be temporary or permanent accommodation registered under the Care Standards Act 2000 to provide accommodation, support and personal care to service users who meet the threshold for adult social services. Service users usually have their own room and share communal areas; however, some newer homes have private as well as communal cooking and washing facilities. Support and care are provided by workers for 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

**Funding**

The majority of supported housing provision receives funding from the local authority through a Supporting People contract to provide housing related support. The central government grant conditions in the past meant that the monies could not be spent on statutory duties which would include supporting care leavers under 18. These conditions have been lifted from April 2009. In most cases service users pay a charge for the accommodation, claiming housing benefit where appropriate. Schemes that provide for a higher level of need, e.g. social/health care, will usually be funded from social services or health.

**Support**

The support offered to a young person will depend on the type of supported housing provision. Some schemes provide 24-hour on site support, while others will provide visiting support within office hours. The young person will usually be allocated a worker who may be referred to as a key worker, support worker, housing support worker or project worker. The worker will be responsible for supporting the young person to live independently or sustain the capacity to do. This may include assistance with budgeting, enabling access to training, education and employment, development of living skills, support in managing a tenancy/licence and social networking.

**Housing management**

The young person will be provided with housing management services and this may be provided by the same organisation providing the support or by a separate organisation or individual. The housing management service ensures the property is safe, maintained and well managed and includes lettings, collecting the rent, repairs, neighbour disputes and tenancy/licence enforcement.

**Tenure**

The type of tenure the young person will be granted depends on the nature of the accommodation. With any type of occupancy agreement the young person will be given rights and responsibilities to adhere to. In some cases these will be supplemented by house rules. Breaching the agreement or house rules may lead to enforcement action and could result in the young person being asked to leave the scheme or evicted.
Good practice case study

The Leaving Care Company (TLCC) is a private limited company that provides accommodation and support to young people (16 — 21 years) who are leaving care, young people in need and those with disabilities. The services are commissioned by various local authorities, leaving care teams and social service departments. TLCC aims to provide accommodation and bespoke support services to young people which enable them to acquire the skills to live independently.

The services TLCC provide and the respective roles and responsibility of the local authority and company are set out in a commissioning contract. TLCC also have a contract with the young person in the form of a placement or tenancy agreement that sets out TLCC’s and the young person’s rights and responsibilities. TLCC also work in partnership with other agencies, youth offending teams, children and adolescent mental health, substance misuse, Connexions etc. LCC workers attend statutory review of care plans, prior to a young person being referred, and when they are in their placement.

The housing is sourced from the private sector; TLCC have an agreement with the landlord then provide a package of support around the young person. TLCC also provide support-only packages to young people who have their own accommodation. The support offered is intensive and there is a 24-hour on call advisory service. Young people are supported in acquiring the life skills to live independently, including practical and emotional support, and TLCC has currently embarked on a three-year project to accredit the work done by young people in each session through ASDAN and COPE. Young people can have up to three placements with TLCC which enables them to experience the behaviour that leads to tenancy breakdown without jeopardising their future housing options.

Contact Eva Perkins eva@theleavingcarecompany.co.uk

Key issues for care leavers

Young people leaving care may have aspirations to live more independently, but require support to acquire the life skills to achieve and maintain this. Care leavers, like their peers, will have short and long term aspirations and these will change during their transition to adulthood.

- Directors of children’s services should ensure young people are able to access a range of suitable and appropriate supported accommodation to offer them choice, that reflect both their current needs, preferences and their aspirations for the future.

Despite the advantages of supported housing, its availability varies across the country. Leaving care services may have access to care leaver specific provision or may be able to use generic provision. In some areas providers of Supporting People funded generic provision may be reluctant to take care leavers under 18 years of age, because of issues of funding.

- Children’s service directors should jointly commission supporting people funded services, so that a number of beds are available for young people leaving care who are under age 18.

- Leaving care managers should encourage Supporting People funded projects to take younger care leavers by managing recharging at a local authority, not provider, level.

- Leaving care managers should identify the supported housing available and develop access arrangements to a range of provision to meet the diverse needs of young people leaving care.

Children’s services have a statutory obligation to provide or pay for accommodation until the young person reaches 18 years of age. This can lead to provision coming to an end abruptly when the young person reaches age 18. When the legal obligation on leaving care services to pay for accommodation and support ceases,
the young person will usually be personally responsible for the rent element and the scheme will have to negotiate who pays for the support. Some young people can experience problems in meeting rent payments, e.g. unaccompanied asylum seeking children whose legal status has not been resolved. Supported housing providers may be reluctant to take certain groups of young people leaving care if they are concerned that they will be faced with funding the placement or evicting the young person for rent arrears when they reach age 18.

Projects should be jointly commissioned by directors of children’s services and Supporting People services so that, when young people reach 18, they do not have to move out if they still require a service.

Directors of children’s services should ensure that the support they commission for young people does not end abruptly on their 18th birthday, recognising that the transition to adulthood is not chronological but needs-led. This should include budgeting for support for older care leavers.

Although supported housing offers young people leaving care the opportunity to experience living more independently in a supported setting, it does not fall under the regulatory regime of Ofsted as care placements do.

Leaving care managers should ensure that contract or service level agreements between the local authority and providers of accommodation and support outlines the roles and responsibilities of each agency and key personnel. The contract or agreement should outline key processes, e.g. referral, support, risk assessment and management and move on, including how appropriate information will be communicated between the parties and personnel, taking into account both confidentiality and information sharing.

Leaving care managers should ensure that for all groups of young people placed in supported housing services, arrangements are in place to continue to fund the placement when the young person reaches 18, or to ensure they are moved to suitable alternative accommodation.

The leaving care service continues to have statutory responsibilities to the young person until they are 21 years old. If a young person is placed in supported housing, although the provider may be commissioned to provide some of those responsibilities, leaving care services should still be providing some services. This can be confusing for the young person and, unless properly defined, can lead to duplication of work or gaps in service provision. Given there is more than one agency involved in the young person’s support there is a need for real communication and coordination.

Leaving care managers should ensure that contract or service level agreements between the local authority and providers of accommodation and support outlines the roles and responsibilities of each agency and key personnel. The contract or agreement should outline key processes, e.g. referral, support, risk assessment and management and move on, including how appropriate information will be communicated between the parties and personnel, taking into account both confidentiality and information sharing.

Leaving care managers should ensure that for all groups of young people placed in supported housing services, arrangements are in place to continue to fund the placement when the young person reaches 18, or to ensure they are moved to suitable alternative accommodation.

The social worker and the support worker should explain to the young person what their respective roles will be and what the young person can expect from the respective agencies in terms of support. It should be clear to the young person which agency is responsible for what aspect of support, and this should be outlined in the young person’s Pathway Plan.

The social worker should ensure that each young person has an individual protocol on what information is going to be shared about them and how that information is going to be communicated; this should be negotiated with the young person.
Key elements of a service level agreement

- Definition of the client group suitable for the accommodation
- Definition of the level and nature of the support provided
- Description of the referral process and who is responsible for decisions
- Includes a set of service standards
- Allows for the involvement of young people in governance and service delivery
- Establishes the level of qualifications, skills training of support staff
- Ensures those working with those under-18 and vulnerable adults have the necessary checks (e.g. CRB and Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) list)
- Identifies how the service is to be monitored and inspected and by whom, including children’s services, housing department, supporting people and other partner agencies

Referral routes into supported housing often take the form of an application form, a visit and some form of assessment interview. Applicants are assessed against the selection criteria for the scheme ensuring that the young person’s needs can be met by the provision. Young people leaving care will have had an assessment of their needs in their Pathway Plan which can assist in ensuring the scheme is appropriate for their needs.

Social workers should be aware of the selection criteria for the relevant supported housing so that appropriate referrals are made.

Joint working between social workers and support staff should start as soon as the scheme has been identified as a suitable placement for a young person.

Provider support staff should attend LAC reviews/pathway planning early so that the provider risk and needs assessments reflects the requirements of the young person.

Practice example

Kick Start London is a third sector provider of supported housing services for young people. Kick Start have an emergency assessment placement which is utilised by leaving care services. Kick Start work jointly with the young person and leaving care services, to share information and draw up the young person’s care and support plan involving other agencies where required. The support plan clearly identifies the aims and objectives of the support, how best to deliver a joint service, and the roles of the individuals concerned. All the agencies included in the care plan and support package are in regular contact with each other, the young person is updated and informed and the strategy is kept under constant review.

Contact Pam Robinson
pam.r@kickstartlondon.org.uk

Hull is a unitary authority that has approximately 45 young people leaving care every year. Hull has a single access point to all the supported housing available in the locality. This enables staff to make best use of the provision to meet the accommodation and support needs of each care leaver.

Contact daemon.cartwright2@hullcc.gov.uk

Young people leaving care will often have moved from an environment in which they were more supervised and less able to take risks than their peers. While enjoying the increased freedom they may be less able to manage being responsible for themselves and the action of their visitors. When placing care leavers in larger shared supported housing the leaving care team should be aware that the environment can impact negatively, especially on those who are younger and less resilient.
Social workers should support the young person to understand the implications of their responsibilities under an occupancy agreement. Pre-tenancy training should be offered to all young people who are assessed as at risk of not managing their occupancy agreement.

The support worker should ensure that the young person understands their responsibilities under their occupancy agreement, the consequences of breaching their agreement before they move into a scheme and during their stay there.

The social worker and the support worker should ensure that the needs and any risks for the young person, associated with moving from care to more independent accommodation, are assessed and addressed. The support offered by the provider and continuing support from leaving care services should identify how these needs are going to be met and how the risks are going to be minimised.

The leaving care manager and housing support manager should agree early intervention strategies, including how concerns are communicated, appropriate information shared, and action plans where a young person is at risk of not managing in the accommodation.

The social worker should ensure that each young person has a contingency plan as part of their Pathway Plan for alternative accommodation if they are not managing in their accommodation. Alternative accommodation should include both shared and self contained accommodation options where possible.

Practice example

The Camden accommodation pathway outlined in the strategic section allows young people to be moved to another accommodation type in the pathway if they are not managing in their current accommodation.

The leaving care manager should negotiate an eviction protocol with supported housing providers to reduce the risk of care leavers losing their accommodation.

Practice example

Wiltshire is a two-tier area with a county council and four district authorities. It has approximately 30 young people leaving care every year. Providers have changed their eviction procedure to be able to support care leavers and After Care have trained providers in techniques to avoid eviction.

Contact kathylongshaw@wiltshire.gov.uk

There is a lot of confusion amongst landlords about the type of tenancy agreement that can be granted to young people, especially those under 18 (minors). This can result in young people being placed on less secure forms of agreement or being required to have a guarantor. Providers may ask for a guarantor simply because the young person is a care leaver and has a social worker.42

Managers of supported housing provision should ensure that they understand the legal position in relation to young people and tenancy agreements and grant the most secure form of agreement compatible with the purpose of the scheme.

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42 NCAS briefing on tenure and care leavers www.leavingcare.org/data/tmp/5408-11071.pdf
Social workers should ensure that young people placed in supported housing are granted an appropriate agreement and provided with a guarantor where required.

Housing support managers should examine their practices of requiring a guarantor for all young people to see if it is justified; if required guarantors should only be sought on an individual basis.

Supported housing is usually a temporary arrangement and the young person will move on when they have acquired the skills to live independently. Some supported housing will provide resettlement support or arrange for floating support when a young person moves out, however for care leavers the local authority remains responsible for providing continuing support.

Social workers should ensure that the young person’s Pathway Plan addresses what settled accommodation the young person needs and aspires to have. The social worker and support worker should establish who is providing what support to the young person in securing move-on accommodation, e.g., support in activating housing application and participating in choice based lettings.

The leaving care manager should ensure there is a protocol identifying a lead professional and the roles of leaving care and the provider responsible for resettlement support for the young person, including access to floating support services.

Care leavers are a distinct group of diverse young people with their own needs and aspirations. Providers should ensure that their housing and support service offers young people what they want/need.

Supported housing managers should ensure that young people leaving care are able to take part in, and are represented in all user involvement opportunities.
Good practice case study

Croydon is a London borough that has approximately 135 young people leaving care each year. Leaving care services provide services to 1,100+ young people, over 65 percent being unaccompanied asylum seeking children. Croydon commission a range of supported housing to meet the needs of their young people. Croydon Association for Young Single Homeless (CAYSH) provide supported housing for 18 young people in five shared houses for up to four young people. The houses are good quality street properties with each young person having their own bedroom and sharing bathroom, kitchen, lounge and laundry facilities.

Young people are supported by staff to enable them to acquire the skills to live independently. Staff are on site at the scheme from nine am to five pm, available from the nearby head office until seven pm and managers are on call until eight pm. CAYSH can also provide a 24 hour on call service if required by the leaving care team. CAYSH ensure they have a good relationship with the leaving care team. If there is a problem both parties will communicate quickly and are committed to sorting it out.

The scheme is jointly commissioned by Supporting People who manage the contract for the services and monitor the effectiveness and quality using contract compliance and the Supporting People quality assessment framework and national outcomes framework. As Supporting People manage the contract they simply invoice leaving care for the support element for those young people under 18, CAYSH invoice for the rental element of the service until the young person is 18 when they are responsible for their own rent, being able to claim housing benefit if required.

If a young person is not managing in the accommodation CAYSH will ask for an urgent meeting with the leaving care team that will look at a suitable placement for the young person, which could include moving them to another part of CAYSH provision, e.g. supported lodgings or back into foster placement.

Contact charlie.rourke@caysh.org

Additional resources and web links

- NCAS Resources www.leavingcare.org/professionals/whoarewe/projects/accommodation/operational/supportedhousing
- Sitra www.sitra.org
- Supporting People www.spkweb.org.uk
- Setting up: A Place to Call Home — Care leavers foundation report on leaving care grants www.brynmelyngroupfoundation.org/documents/APlacetoCallHome-ASurveyonLeavingCareGrants.pdf
Chapter summary:
Foyers offer a holistic service where young people can access accommodation support with training and education to assist them in the transition to adulthood, by developing their economic and social capital.

Introduction
Foyers can provide a holistic accommodation, support, training, education and employment experience for young people leaving care. Around ten percent of the young people accommodated in foyers are known to be care leavers. Foyers are run by a range of third sector providers that range from larger national Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to smaller local charities. They can vary in size from eight to 210 beds with an average size of around 40. Usually young people are housed together on one site, or within a group of buildings, either purpose built or converted. Some providers utilise a dispersed model where young people are accommodated separately in social housing and utilise a training centre as a focal point.

There are currently 130 foyers across the UK, providing:

- a stable and secure community in which young people can support one another and achieve independence;
- help with finding appropriate employment, training or education to make this possible;
- training in basic skills and independent living skills and personal development;
- help with finding settled accommodation and ongoing support when the young person has left the foyer.

Foyers are different to other forms of supported accommodation, in that the tenure and services are usually offered on the basis that the young person agrees to take up, or engage with, the training education or employment services offered. Length of stay varies, the minimum being three months and the maximum two years. Young people will usually move out when they and their support worker agree they are ready to live more independently. Foyers can work with a variety of young people, including those with complex needs, drug and alcohol problems and mental health needs. Each foyer will have its own selection criteria, which identifies the level of need that can be managed with the staffing levels and services offered.

The Foyer Federation is a membership body that accredits independent foyers. The Foyer Federation develops and encourages new approaches to support young people as they make the transition to adulthood; particularly those who are at risk through homelessness, family breakdown or social exclusion.

Support
Most foyers offer differing levels of support, including 24-hour cover incorporating security or concierge services, or a limited day time service with extended hours from e.g. eight am to ten pm. The cover offered varies widely from area to area. Young people are allocated a support worker who assesses their

44 www.foyer.net
needs and aspirations and works with them to devise a personal development plan for the short and medium term.

**Personal development**

In order to be termed a foyer a scheme must provide life skills programmes for their residents. This commonly includes assistance with training, education and employment. About a third of foyers offer a City and Guilds certified programme that accredits the personal support or development plan titled the ‘Certificate in Self-Development Through Learning’, or ‘Learning Power Award’. In addition most foyers offer social programmes and a range of activities from art to gardening and football to holistic health sessions.

**Key issues for care leavers**

Foyers vary widely in the degree to which they work with care leavers. A very small number have been designed and set up to solely to accommodate care leavers, others block book a fixed number of beds for care leavers aged 16—18 paid for by the local authority.

Leaving care managers should identify the number of young people who would benefit from living in a foyer environment by aggregating information derived from individual Pathway Plans, identify what foyer services are available in the locality and negotiate referral rights for those young people.

There is a wide range of the services and accommodation types that foyers offer young people leaving care. The diverse needs of care leavers mean that the foyer services available in the area may or may not suit their needs. It is not often clear what services the foyers provide and what responsibilities remain with the leaving care team.

Leaving care managers should negotiate a service agreement that specifies what services will be provided by the foyer, and outlines the responsibilities and obligations of the leaving care service.

Social workers should be aware of the selection criteria of the foyer, the support services that are offered, and the level of engagement expected from the young person.

Some foyer settings may pose challenges to those leaving care, who will be used to a more supportive environment in a smaller family size setting. Although a foyer may be staffed on a 24-hour basis this does not mean that care leavers will be able to manage in ‘halls of residence’ style, medium or larger size foyers.

Social workers should ensure that the Pathway Plan identifies if the accommodation services available would meet the young person’s needs in their transition to adulthood. Medium or larger size foyer services should not be considered for younger and more vulnerable care leavers, unless there is an assessment that the young person would actively benefit from this type of provision.

Although foyers are able to work with young people with multiple or complex needs, they do require young people to engage with the support offered and take part in meaningful occupation during the day either provided by the foyer or an outside agency.

Young people should only be referred to a foyer by a social worker, if they are able to maintain a supportive relationship with their key worker, have the motivation to engage in a programme of activity, attend college or work or work-like activities.

Foyers can house young people from the age of 16 to 25 years. A young person can be placed in a foyer while 16 or 17 years old and still be in a foyer service beyond their 18th birthday.
Children’s service directors should jointly commission foyer services (or establish a protocol) with Supporting People to enable young people to continue to receive support from foyer services when they reach the age of 18.

Foyers cater for a wide variety of young people and staff may not have the specialist skills to respond to the needs of young people leaving care.

Foyer managers should ensure that support staff who work with young people leaving care are trained specifically in providing services to this vulnerable group of young people. Leaving care services should play an active part in training staff in foyers in the needs of care experienced young people.

Some foyers can be wary about accepting the referral of a care leaver because, once housed by the foyer, the leaving care team may not regard them as in immediate need and (although they should) may not continue to support them to meet their Pathway Plan goals.

Foyer managers should ensure support staff are aware of the legal framework that underpins the entitlements of young people leaving care, to ensure that young people are not disadvantaged by being placed in foyer services.

Social workers should ensure that they continue to support the young person when in foyer services. They should work in partnership with foyer staff to ensure that they are supported to achieve the goals set out in their Pathway Plan.

Hampshire is a two-tier area, which has approximately 100 young people leaving care each year. Step by Step operate in Aldershot providing a number of services to young people, including foyer services, supported lodgings and floating support.

The initial access to the accommodation scheme is via a referral agency or self-referral to Emmaus House. Emmaus House has 12 bed spaces which include an emergency bed. Emmaus has a 13-week stay, as the accommodation comprises two-person shared bedrooms. Step by Step are currently developing replacement single person provision. Emmaus offers a high level of staffing, meals are provided and there is a structured regime. Residents are expected to engage with assessment and key working and there is a curfew. If residents manage in Emmaus House they move on to the next stage, Victoria Road, which is a shared housing environment. Although staff are present 24 hours a day, residents are expected to prepare their own meals and the support is less intensive. Residents stay approximately six months. From Victoria Road, residents will move into a supported studio flat in a purpose built block. Staff will continue to provide key work and young people stay for one year. If they are managing successfully they can move into a dispersed one bedroom flat and continue to be supported. At the end of their stay young people are supported to move to their own accommodation, either social housing or privately rented. Step by Step offer tenancy support to enable assist young people find a suitable place to rent, get furniture, set up utilities and identify the life skills required for living independently. Step by Step also manage supported lodgings schemes, one of which is specifically for care leavers.

Step by Step has a very strong cultural emphasis on youth development by providing a range of activities for informal

(cont. overleaf)
learning and practical skills development. The learning and skills activities range from informal education, IT access and support to peer mentoring on homelessness and drugs and alcohol awareness. Although attendance at Step by Step is not compulsory, young people are expected to engage in some form of meaningful activity during the day.

When young people enter the foyer they have to sign a charter giving their commitment to make a constructive use of their time and engage with foyer staff providing them with support. If they do not adhere to this charter they will not be able to progress through the scheme and in some cases may be found an alternative place to live. Care leavers access the foyer services usually through being placed in the emergency bed at Emmaus House or move from supported lodgings if it is felt that they would benefit from being in the shared houses or flats. They can also move on from supported lodgings to the supported flats when they are ready to live more independently.

Contact
amanda.dubarry@stepbystep.org.uk

Additional resources and web links

- Foyer Federation
  www.foyer.net

- National Youth Homeless Scheme
  Communities and Local Government
  www.communities.gov.uk/youthhomelessness/widerneeds/learningwork/assessingneeds/casestudy1/

- Homelessness list of resources on Foyers
  www.homelesspages.org.uk/kwds/keywords.asp?kwid=127
Chapter summary:
For young people leaving care the biggest cohort are living in independent accommodation by the time they are aged 19.

Introduction
At age 19, 42 percent of care leavers live in independent accommodation.\(^{45}\) The four main types of independent accommodation are local authority housing, housing association properties, private rented accommodation, and owning the whole or part of a property. In England 70 percent of people are owner occupiers, 18 percent live in some type of social housing, and 12 percent in the private rented sector.\(^{46}\)

The independent accommodation options for young people leaving care will depend on:

- the availability of the different types of accommodation within the young person’s local authority or the area where they want to live;
- the needs and aspirations of the young person;
- the circumstances of the young person (e.g. their previous housing experiences); and
- the policies and procedures of housing providers.

Local authority housing
Local authority (council) housing is property owned by the local authority. They may be managed by another agency, e.g. an arm’s length management organisation (ALMO) or a tenant management organisation (TMO). Where a local authority has retained its housing stock (some have transferred ownership to a registered social landlord) it will usually be the largest housing provider in an area, and authorities generally do not have housing outside of their locality. In two-tier areas — where the children’s services authority will not be the housing authority — the area is usually divided into several districts and policy responsibility for housing falls to the district authority. For example, within Hertfordshire there are 11 district authorities which are housing authorities.

There is a wide range of local authority housing, from bedsits to large family houses. The housing must be allocated in accordance with the authority’s published allocation scheme, and this must give reasonable preference to certain groups of housing applicants, as specified in Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996. The type and size of the housing will be allocated to suit the circumstances and needs of the particular applicant. Access to social housing for care leavers will depend on the housing authority’s allocation scheme, and on the arrangements between the housing authority and children’s services or leaving care teams. These may include the leaving care team nominating young people for housing, the housing department agreeing to earmark a number (quota) of properties each year for housing care leavers, or care leavers being given priority and supported through choice based lettings. Effective planning, both between housing and children’s services, and between children’s services and the young person, should ensure that care leavers do not have to make a homeless application.

\(^{45}\) www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000810/FinalSFRTablesoct.xls#’F1’!A1

\(^{46}\) www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/xls/139268.xls
Practice example

Hull is a unitary authority that has approximately 45 young people leaving care every year. Hull has a local agreement that all care leavers are placed in band two of the choice based letting scheme which gives them sufficient currency to access Hull City Council housing stock.

Contact daemon.cartwright@hull.gov.uk

Registered social landlords (RSLs)

RSLs are housing associations registered with and regulated by the Tenant Services Authority. They usually have charitable objectives, their aims are usually to provide affordable housing to those in housing need. They are not restricted by local authority boundaries and the larger RSLs operate across a number of regions. Like local authority housing, they have a variety of properties. The majority of nominations to RSL properties now come from local authority housing waiting lists, because of arrangements between RSLs and local authorities when properties are being developed. Other access routes can include moving on from supported housing owned by the RSL, or in some areas leaving care teams have negotiated their own nomination agreements with local RSLs.

Private rented accommodation

Privately rented accommodation can be offered by an individual or a company. It can include a variety of accommodation but, unlike RSL or local authority properties, can include flat shares. Landlords usually ask for a deposit and a month's rent in advance. In some areas local authorities or other providers run rent deposit or rent guarantee schemes to support vulnerable people in accessing the private rented sector.

Although young people do not have to be nominated by the local authority for private sector leasing, some local authorities include privately rented properties in their choice based letting schemes. Usually private sector properties are accessed through letting agents, estate agents, newspaper adverts or through direct contact with the landlord.

Owner occupation

Although this is the most common form of housing provision in England, it is least likely to be accessed by young people leaving care. The cost of home ownership can be prohibitive for young people, and they may need a sizeable deposit to buy their own property. There are also additional costs such as insurance and maintenance. Through housing associations the government has introduced several initiatives to support people onto the property ladder, e.g. shared ownership schemes, which are part rent/part buy.

Key issues for care leavers

Social housing provides young people with an opportunity to live in settled accommodation. It is therefore critical that young people have access to this option when it is appropriate for them in terms of their skills, needs and requirements. For example, it would not be helpful to offer a young person at 18, who is planning to go to university in another area, permanent social housing in their local authority. Another example would be a young mother not being able to access settled housing because of a blanket policy of not offering tenancies to those under 18.

Housing directors should ensure that allocation policies and procedures should give care leavers priority for social housing, when this has been identified as appropriate to a young person’s needs and aspirations in their Pathway Plan.

Leaving care managers should ensure there is an opportunity for young people to acquire the skills to live independently and a process to demonstrate this to housing providers.
Young people say that being on their own (loneliness), not being able to cope independently and not being able to get help when they need it are among the worst aspects of leaving care.\(^47\) Isolation and loneliness can lead to young people not staying in their properties or becoming vulnerable to their property being taken over by unwanted visitors (tenancy hijack), or problems with guests. They may also find it difficult to deal with the practicalities of managing in their own accommodation.

\[S\] Directors of children’s service should ensure young people are only expected to live independently when they have demonstrated that they have acquired the skills to live independently, including emotional resilience.

\[S\] Directors of children’s service should ensure that the protocols between housing and children’s services make explicit that all care leavers in their initial independent tenancy should be offered floating support services for the first 12 months.

It is not uncommon in any type of rented housing (social or private) for a young person to be expected to provide a guarantor. Young people accessing private sector leasing may not want their landlord to know they are a care leaver.

\[O\] Leaving care managers should negotiate with landlords about the requirement of a guarantor, but have processes in place to be able to provide a guarantor where necessary.

\[O\] Leaving care managers should explore how a young person can be provided with a guarantor without disclosing that the young person has been in care.

The leaving care manager should be aware of the tenancies available to young people and have sample tenancies that landlords are able to use for those under 18.

**Local authority housing/RSLs**

A substantial number of care leavers are placed in out of borough fostering or residential placements. This presents problems when the young person is ready to access settled housing. The responsible authority remains responsible for supporting them to access housing, but they will have established their social networks where they are living. Many local authorities and RSLs in some circumstances operate local connection policies, which mean they will only house those with a connection to the locality area, usually through living or working there for a certain length of time.

\[S\] Directors of children’s services should negotiate with directors of the housing departments to enter into reciprocal arrangements that will enable care leavers to access social housing in the area where they are living.

\[P\] Social workers should support care leavers to access supported lodgings or supported housing in their area, via the reciprocal arrangements mentioned above.

Some young people report being pressurised to accept their permanent accommodation offer so that they can move out of more costly residential, foster or supported provision.

\[P\] Social workers should only put forward young people for their settled housing offer when they indicate that they are ready to take on the responsibilities of a permanent tenancy.

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47 Young people’s views on leaving care [www.rights4me.org/reportView.cfm?id=6&startRow=31](http://www.rights4me.org/reportView.cfm?id=6&startRow=31)
Practice example

**Wiltshire** is a two-tier area and has approximately 30 young people leaving care every year. Young people leaving care can take up a place in a training flat with an agreed package of support. If they complete their stay successfully they are able to be placed in Band A within the choice based letting scheme. This scheme is also available within RSL supported accommodation if the young person successfully maintains their accommodation.

**Contact** kathy.longshaw@wiltshire.gov.uk

If choice based lettings exist, young people should be supported by their social worker to take full advantage of the opportunities this presents.

If there is a quota or nomination system leaving care managers should negotiate that young people have a choice of accommodation within this, e.g. the local authority could offer a choice of three properties (the one accepted representing one nomination).

Practice example

**Telford and Wrekin council** is a unitary authority with approximately ten young people leaving care every year. Telford and Wrekin has an arrangement that all their young people participate in choice based letting. The leaving care worker is registered as a ‘proxy chooser’ on the choice based letting system and is able to bid on behalf of the young person.

**Contact** Sue.wardle@telford.gov.uk

If the young person is moving into local authority housing, the manager of the housing department should ensure that the young person is not charged rent until the property is ready for them to move into. The leaving care manager should consider how they make up any rent shortfall if such arrangements cannot be negotiated.

Where the young person is moving into RSL or private accommodation the leaving care manager should try and negotiate that the tenancy does not start, and rent become due until the property is ready for the young person to move into. Leaving care managers should consider how they make up the rent shortfall from leaving care if such arrangements cannot be negotiated.

**S**

Directors of children’s services should ensure that the local authority provides a setting up home or leaving care grant which enables the young person to adequately furnish their property, recognising that some things can be bought second hand, e.g. fridges and bed frames, whereas other items, e.g. mattresses and bed linen should be new. The eligibility for any grant, what the grant includes, and the financial limitations should be detailed in writing and publicly available in a format that is accessible for young people.

Setting up a new home from scratch is costly and takes time. On many occasions properties are not ready to be moved into and require decorating and furnishing. Young people leaving care are younger than their peers when they move into independent accommodation, so will not have had time to acquire furniture and equipment. They may also not have their family to buy or donate required items. Housing benefit regulations are such that young people cannot claim for their rent until they are physically living in a property, leaving the young person accruing arrears as soon as they accept a property.

**P**

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Social housing providers may be privy to more information about young people leaving care than other housing applicants, which may be disadvantageous. In some cases, young people leaving care are being asked to undertake checks with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB), which is unacceptable if other applicants are not routinely asked, and could be challenged under the Human Rights Act 1998 as a breach of the right to privacy.

Within allocation policies both directors of local authority housing departments and RSLs housing departments should have positive practices on housing care leavers.

Managers of social housing should only ask for information on care leavers that would be asked for, and available about, any other applicant.

Managers of social housing should ensure that information is only used to identify additional support that needs to be put in place, and not as a means of excluding young people from social housing.

Young people with experience of frequent placement changes may be at greater risk of tenancy breakdown. If young people are evicted or abandon their property they may be deemed ‘intentionally homeless’, and often do not recognise the limitations this places on their future housing options.

Managers should ensure that housing staff are aware of the needs of young people leaving care and the specific risks these young people face.

Housing officers should keep the tenancy under review, recognising that they may need to arrange support or even transfer a young person to different accommodation to prevent an abandonment or eviction.

Directors of housing services should ensure that young people who have experienced eviction or abandonment in their initial tenancy are not presumed to be intentionally homeless.

Directors of children’s services should negotiate with directors of housing departments and RSLs to put in place a 12-week trial period that allows young people to end their tenancy formally if they are not managing in independent accommodation, that does not compromise their priority and non-intentionality status.

Private rented sector

The private rented sector can provide opportunities for young people leaving care if they want to live out of borough, live in a particular area where housing is scarce or if they want to enter into a flat-sharing arrangement. The private rented sector offers more flexibility for young people, and could be suitable for young people who want to try independent living without committing to a social housing tenancy.

The requirement of a deposit and a month’s rent in advance can pose difficulties for care leavers, who can have limited savings. If people move on from one property to another they may not have had their deposit back in time to put a deposit down on the new property.

Social workers should be aware of any rent deposit or rent guarantee schemes in their area that will support a young person moving into the private rented sector.

Where references are required social workers/carers should be supporting the young person in setting up a bank account as soon as they are able to do so.

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48 A person deliberately did (or didn’t do) something that caused them to leave accommodation which they could otherwise have stayed in, and it would have been reasonable for them to stay there.
For care leavers aged 22, 23 and 24 years, the local housing allowance (benefit to pay for housing in the private rented sector) they can receive is subject to the shared room rent restriction, which means it comprises average cost of a room in a shared house. This usually happens after formal leaving support is withdrawn at age 21. The local housing allowance is also paid to the young person unless the housing benefit office is advised to pay it directly to the landlord.

Young people who are at risk of being unable to sustain self-contained property at age 22 should be referred by their social worker to shared accommodation or social housing.

Social workers should support the young person to ask for rent to be paid directly to the landlord until the young person feels able to manage their accommodation charges.

Landlords can often be reticent about letting to young people and care leavers have an additional stigma, due to negative perception of those in the care system. Due to the unregulated nature of the private rented sector young people may also be vulnerable to unscrupulous landlords who do not maintain health and safety and general standards of their property, young people may feel less able to complain about and question this.

Practice example

Hull City Council when placing young people in private rented accommodation, arranges for the fire brigade to work with the young person in making the necessary fire safety checks and increasing the young person’s knowledge of fire safety. The personal adviser will check the accommodation to ensure that it is of a suitable standard. Hull also provides a bond to enable young people to access private rented accommodation.

Contact daemon.cartwright2@hullcc.gov.uk

Owner occupation

Owner occupation should not be ruled out as an option for young people leaving care. Housing associations have developed schemes where people can part-rent and part-buy a property. In some areas key worker schemes allow for people who work in certain professions to have access to low cost home ownership schemes.

Leaving care managers should identify schemes that enable young people to part rent/part buy or build up money for a deposit.
**Good practice case study**

**St Basils** works across the West Midlands providing a range of supported accommodation, floating support, housing advice, mediation and learning opportunities for young people. St Basils have developed a starter home initiative for young people that allows young people in employment to live in supported housing, sustain employment, escape the benefit trap and, most importantly, save towards a stake in a settled home of their choice.

Young people whose employment can sustain an affordable rent are given a three year assured shorthold tenancy agreement. From the rent paid St Basils invest £10 a week on behalf of the young person which will amount to over £2,000 by the time the young person leaves. If the young person loses their employment the investment will be simply frozen while they are supported in finding employment. When the young person leaves the scheme they will be supported in deciding what independent housing option they want to access; they could use the money for a deposit to buy/part-buy a home or a rent deposit in privately rented accommodation. The starter home initiative enables young people to start planning and saving for their future independent housing options.

St Basils have identified a financial model that will allow other organisations to adopt this initiative.

**Contact** jean.templeton@stbasils.org.uk

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**Additional resources and web links**

- **NCAS resources**

- **Shelter resources — Rent deposit/guarantee schemes**
  [england.shelter.org.uk/get_advice/paying_for_a_home/tenancy_deposits](http://england.shelter.org.uk/get_advice/paying_for_a_home/tenancy_deposits)

- **Tenant Service Authority**
  [www.tenantservicesauthority.org/](http://www.tenantservicesauthority.org/)

- **Information sharing protocol**
  [www.housingcorp.gov.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.12842](http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.12842)

- **National housing federation**
  [www.housing.org.uk](http://www.housing.org.uk)

- **A place to call home** — Care leavers foundation report on leaving care grants
  [www.brynmelyngroupfoundation.org/documents/APlacetoCallHomeASurveyonLeavingCareGrants.pdf](http://www.brynmelyngroupfoundation.org/documents/APlacetoCallHomeASurveyonLeavingCareGrants.pdf)

- **Homeless pages list of resources on move on accommodation**
  [www.homelesspages.org.uk/kwds/keywords.asp?kwid=133](http://www.homelesspages.org.uk/kwds/keywords.asp?kwid=133) and private rented accommodation
Chapter summary:
For young people leaving care floating support is beneficial when they are moving to their independent accommodation and also if they run into problems when in their accommodation.

Introduction
Floating support enables young people to receive support while living in independent accommodation. It seeks to support people to maintain their tenancies/housing and, because the support is being delivered into the person’s home, it relies on them to actively want the support and be willing to engage with the service. Like supported housing it can often be referred to in different terms, e.g. tenancy sustainment.

Aims
Floating support can cover a variety of tasks but broadly includes:

- Increasing young people’s confidence and skills to live in their independent housing, usually through a combination of practical and personal support.
- The support is linked to the individual and not their accommodation and will follow them if they move.
- The support, although individual, is time limited and looks to reduce over time as the person’s need for support diminishes.
- The support provider connects the young person with wider services in their community, utilising more specialist services where required.
- The support provider advocates on behalf of the young person with other parties, e.g., landlords, utility providers, neighbours.
- Once support is discontinued there is the possibility to access the service again at a later stage if it is required.

Service delivery
Floating support services operate across a range of accommodation. The availability of Supporting People funding has allowed a growth in floating support. Providers include local authorities, Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), voluntary agencies and private providers. Some floating support services are generic, and provide support for a range of client groups; some are client-group specific and can be aimed at young people at risk or care leavers. There has been a move in some localities to provide floating support for the majority of the schemes funded by Supporting People including supported housing.

Floating support services usually allow for the separation of housing and support services. This has the advantage that tenancy enforcement, e.g. action for rent arrears, is dealt with separately from tenancy support, e.g. support with budgeting. Effective support relies on good communication links between the housing and support provider.

Independent living
Floating support can be a particularly important intervention for young people leaving care as, if it is provided when the young person experiences their first tenancy, it can have a positive impact on their ability to manage the practical and emotional responsibilities of living alone. Floating
support can prevent tenancy failure, particularly in the areas of anti-social behaviour and rent arrears, which commonly lead to young people losing their homes and which often have an impact on their future housing options.

Some young people will access floating support services when they initially move into their independent accommodation. However, floating support can be accessed later if they run into problems with their accommodation.

A number of different issues could be a trigger for referral for floating support, including:

- The young person has a history of, or is currently experiencing
  - poor money management
  - complaints from or about neighbours
  - harassment
  - substance misuse problems
  - mental health problems or learning disabilities
  - problems accessing other services
  - difficulties managing interactions with other people either socially or professionally
  - poor literacy or numeracy skills.

- The young person has no existing support network.

- The accommodation the young person is living in is in a poor state of repair due to neglect by the young person, or an inability to access maintenance services.

- There is evidence that the young person lacks the confidence, skills and resilience to manage the requirements of living independently.

**Key issues for care leavers**

Access to floating support services for care leavers varies across the country and may not be accessible to all young people who are moving into their first tenancy. Individuals supporting care leavers may not be aware of the support services available or may not understand how to access floating support services.

- Directors of children’s services should ensure that the protocols between housing and children’s services make explicit that care leavers in their initial independent tenancy should be offered floating support services for the first 12 months.

- Social workers should obtain copies of the eligibility and referral criteria for floating support services in their locality, so that they are able to refer young people.

Care leavers may be living in independent accommodation prior to their 18th birthday. The responsibility for providing statutory support changes at age 18 for young people leaving care and this may be a point at which they experience difficulties. If there are poor links between children’s and Supporting People services it can be difficult to access appropriate floating support at this point.

- Directors of children’s services should ensure that Supporting People strategies include the housing related needs of care leavers in independent accommodation.

- Social workers should be planning how the housing related support they have been providing will be continued post the young person’s 18th birthday, as part of their continuing pathway planning process.
Practice example

North Lincolnshire Council is a small unitary authority which has approximately 20 young people leaving care each year. The leaving care service receives Supporting People funding for the provision of floating support to care leavers aged 18 to 21. Any care leaver over 18 can access the service for a period of up to two years, they can also refer back if and when required. From April 2009, those aged 16 and 17 will be able to access the service. The service has significantly improved the outcomes for this group of care leavers in relation to maintaining tenancies and successful transitions into adult life.

Contact Sue.Whitfield@northlincs.gov.uk

Floating support is intended to be time limited and to facilitate the young person in acquiring the skills to live independently, utilising the community infrastructure. If services are cut off abruptly the young people may feel abandoned and may struggle to cope.

Social workers and floating support workers should make clear the purpose and the duration of the service to the young person from the outset.

The young person’s need for the service should be continually reviewed by the young person, social workers and floating support workers, and only withdrawn gradually when the young person no longer requires the service and is linked into services in the community.

Social workers and young people should also be clear about how to access the service in the future if their circumstances change.

Floating support workers can only take on new clients as old clients are floated off and services may be oversubscribed.

Social workers should include any requirement for floating support services in the preparation and planning for independent living to allow for a timely referral.

Social workers should ensure that young people who are at risk of tenancy problems are referred early to floating support services.

Many floating support services are generic and may not recognise the specific needs of care leavers, especially as they tend to move into independent living at a much younger age than other groups. This may mean that the service needs to liaise with a different set of support services than they would for adults.

Managers of generic floating support services should ensure that staff have an understanding of statutory support services available to young people leaving care, and what they are entitled to at different ages. Close working relationships with leaving care services and training should ensure this.

The terminology used in floating support can be unhelpful for care leavers, who may not understand what the support entails. They may also be more vulnerable to forming close relationships with support workers, which may lead to the worker’s over-involvement. In addition, floating support is delivered into the young person’s home, which may blur the lines of the relationship.

In communications with young people floating support workers should be clear what the support comprises, e.g. number of visits, purpose, issues that they can get help with.

Floating support workers should establish clear professional boundaries with young people given that they are visiting the young person in their home.
Young people leaving care may have had a negative experience of those who have had a responsibility for providing them with services. They may also perceive it as a continuation of social services supervision rather than a supportive arrangement. Floating support relies on the client’s willingness to engage with the service. However, clients who are hard to reach are not necessarily unwilling to engage. It may take longer to build up trusting relationships and care leavers are especially in need of continuity in terms of staff and support.

Social workers and floating support workers should communicate to young people that floating support is a supportive rather than a supervisory arrangement.

Managers of floating support services should ensure the referral system allows floating support workers to meet and develop a relationship with the young person, before they start taking up the service.

Managers of floating support services should recognise that this group may have had negative experiences in the past and allow for this in service delivery, e.g. staff changes should be kept to a minimum.

There are a number of different service providers involved in supporting young people, particularly for those aged under 18. This could include the housing provider, the floating support provider, social worker and/or personal advisor.

Service managers should ensure that there is effective partnership working between the housing providers, the floating support provider and the leaving care service, which includes regular scheduled meetings.

Social workers, floating support workers and housing officers should agree an information protocol for each young person to address issues of tenancy enforcement action which may be taken against the young person.

The floating support services are delivered into the young person’s home and this requires particular sensitivity to the person’s needs and circumstances.

Managers should ensure there is a system in place for all staff who work with young people to pass on information about cultural and other sensitivities, and potential risks to or from a young person.

Good practice case study

Wandsworth is a unitary authority with approximately 30 young people leaving care each year. Catch22 Wandsworth Independent Living Scheme (WILS) provides an assessment, preparation and supported accommodation service to 230 young people a year who have been looked after by London Borough of Wandsworth social services department. As part of the leaving care service WILS provides a floating support service. The service provides floating support to up to 75 young people who can use the service up to their 21st birthday. There is an expectation that the service will stay with a young person for an average of 18 months. As the service can extend beyond the young person’s 18th birthday the scheme is jointly commissioned by Supporting People and children’s services.

There are several referral routes to the service, including supported housing, training flats, foster care and residential provision. WILS uses the Rainer 12-step programme for supporting young people to acquire the skills to live independently.49

(continues overleaf)

49 www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/doc/484985.doc
Tenants are then supported by the housing worker, personal advisers and social workers, all of whom have a case load. WILS has a service level agreement with the RSLs. The housing worker meets with the agency liaison person and revenue team on a three-monthly basis.

The housing worker has also agreed that they should have a pre-notice meeting and pre-court meeting which includes the young person, for each individual case. The housing worker also has a quarterly meeting with the contracts manager of the RSLs.

Contact ASmith5@wandsworth.gov.uk

Additional resources and web links

- NCAS resources
  www.leavingcare.org/professionals/whoarewe/projects/accommodation/operational

- National Youth Homelessness Scheme
  www.communities.gov.uk/youthhomelessness/accommodation/floatingsupport/

- Joseph Rowntree Foundation
  Service user perspectives on floating support
  www.jrf.org.uk/publications/service-users-perspectives-floating-support

- Homeless pages lists of resources on floating support
  www.homelesspages.org.uk/sortorder/keywproducts.asp?kwid=326
Chapter summary:

Although care leavers should not be placed in emergency accommodation the reality is that it may be necessary if a placement has broken down while another placement is being arranged.

Introduction

Effective pathway planning should mean that the use of emergency accommodation is minimised and, ideally, never required. This section acknowledges however that even the most robust pathway planning cannot completely guard against placement/accommodation breakdown that requires an emergency response. As local authorities become more effective at ensuring that young people are placed in appropriate accommodation and the use of emergency accommodation reduces, local authorities should be better placed to come up with innovative approaches to managing accommodation in an emergency.

Practice example

In Bradford the stringent use of bed and breakfast (B&B) has led to a move to convert three family run B&Bs, who have a maximum of two beds in each establishment, into very short term supported lodgings.

Contact janet.hadi@bradford.gov.uk

In May 2008, Communities and Local Government and the Department for Children, Schools and families issued guidance about joint working between housing and children’s Services. This states that no 16 or 17 year-old should be placed in B&B accommodation by housing services or children’s services, except in an emergency, where B&B accommodation is the only available alternative to rooflessness. In these exceptional cases, B&B accommodation should be used for the shortest time possible and support must be offered to the young person during their stay.

Housing departments and children’s services are expected to adopt a shared strategic approach to the provision of emergency accommodation and housing and support pathways for young people, in order to eradicate the use of B&B accommodation.

In addition young people leaving care who have been placed in emergency accommodation such as B&B are not classified as in ‘suitable accommodation’, for the purpose of reporting local authority performance against the children’s service national indicator set (NI 147).

Characteristics of emergency placements

Most emergency accommodation has some form of restrictions, e.g. residents may not be allowed visitors, they may be expected to be in at a certain time or they may have to leave the accommodation during the day. The facilities are often shared and in some cases residents would be expected to share a bedroom with somebody of the same sex.
Provision is generally generic and may be housing a variety of other vulnerable people of all ages. In some cases meals are provided and there may be access to cooking facilities. There is usually a cost associated with the use of emergency accommodation. Children’s services must maintain and support care leavers under age 18 and are liable for the cost of any emergency placement. Where care leavers are young adults (i.e. over 18) they may be eligible to claim housing benefit for the majority of this cost, the other part of which they would be expected to meet from any allowance, benefit or other income.

Types of emergency accommodation

There are several different types of emergency accommodation. These include:

- **Bed and Breakfast (B&B)** — This is generally accommodation provided on a nightly basis by a commercial provider (i.e. usually accommodation is owned and/or managed by a private landlord). Provision ranges from large hotels to small family run residential accommodation. B&B services are commonly used for those that are homeless, in the case of care leavers if emergency accommodation is required as the young person’s accommodation has broken down. The provider is unlikely to offer support.

- **Emergency hostels** — There is no standard model for emergency hostels, however they usually fulfil some or all of the following criteria: they will accept self referrals; have frequent vacancies; do not hold a waiting list; are intended to be short stay accommodation; provide 24-hour staff cover.\(^{51}\)

- **Night shelters** — Most night shelters are free. These are usually very basic, providing only a bed and in some circumstances food. The decision whether to accommodate an individual is often taken on a night-by-night basis. In some areas night shelters are only open during the winter months and are often referred to as cold weather shelters. Any night shelter that provided dormitory style accommodation is not suitable for care leavers.

- **Crash pads** — ‘Crash pads’ is a generic term that is used for very short-term accommodation that allows for immediate access. There are two main types of crash pads — very short term supported lodgings schemes\(^{52}\) and emergency accommodation in supported housing. The hosts or providers will usually charge for the accommodation and any meals provided.

- **Nightstops** — The supported lodging model of crashpads can be referred to as a Nightstop scheme if it is affiliated to Nightstop UK.\(^{53}\) Nightstop provides a short term bed in the homes of trained and approved volunteers called ‘hosts’.

- **Women’s refuges** — This is temporary accommodation for women and their children who have experienced domestic violence. Access to the scheme is usually through a national helpline or can be through the local authority. The most common model of housing is that women share a bedroom with their children and have access to communal facilities. This accommodation provides for a longer term stay than other emergency accommodation and is often referred to as temporary.

- **Staying with friends or family** — in order to prevent young people being placed in emergency accommodation such as B&B, local authorities will often work with the young person to identify if they can stay with friends, family or previous carers until a suitable placement is found.

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52 See the supported lodgings section for how these schemes are set up and supported.
53 [www.depaulnightstopuk.org/content/depaul-nightstop-uk-home](http://www.depaulnightstopuk.org/content/depaul-nightstop-uk-home)
Key issues for care leavers

As a corporate parent the local authority should plan for the accommodation needs of the young people that they look after. While good quality planning of accommodation and support should minimise the need for emergency accommodation, all local authorities should ensure that there are procedures in place to access appropriate accommodation should the need arise.

Directors of children’s services and housing should jointly develop a strategy on the provision of emergency accommodation for care leavers. The strategy should aim to minimise and ultimately eliminate the use of B&B accommodation.

In order to both minimise and make effective use of emergency accommodation the leaving care manager should collect data on (1) numbers of care leavers in emergency accommodation, (2) what type of emergency accommodation, (3) how long they have been in the accommodation and (4) the reasons they were placed there.

Leaving care managers should ensure there are procedures in place to quickly reassess young people’s needs and identify further accommodation options, so that they can be rapidly moved from emergency accommodation into a more permanent housing solution.

Social workers must ensure that the pathway plan process on accommodation includes contingency arrangements to be followed in cases where young people lose their planned accommodation at short notice.

Social workers should negotiate an early warning system with residential care staff, foster carers or other housing providers, which is triggered if the placement is in danger of breaking down. They should consider putting in extra support or arranging mediation to avoid placement breakdown so that the young person can stay on until another suitable accommodation option is found.

Care leavers are an especially vulnerable group of young people and emergency accommodation is generally direct access. It is therefore important that any emergency accommodation used to place them is appropriate to their needs and that the leaving care services have taken steps to establish that any accommodation used as an emergency placement is safe, secure and suitable for the short term accommodation of a vulnerable young person. Although B&B accommodation is not recommended, there may be circumstances in which it is the most appropriate to meet the young person’s needs. A care leaver from a rural community may be able to stay in the local area by staying in B&B rather than having to move to an emergency hostel in an urban area.

Leaving care managers should have in place an out-of-hours duty rota that allows all young people placed in emergency accommodation to contact their staff by telephone.

Leaving care managers should ensure all emergency accommodation used for care leavers is checked and vetted. This should include:

- The physical accommodation being appropriate for the needs of young people. They need to have somewhere they can sleep and wash in privacy.
- The location of the property should be safe, particularly for young people at night.
- The property should be maintained to an appropriate level of health and safety, e.g., furnishings and fittings should be fire resistant.
- The landlord should be checked using the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB).

Directors of children’s services must set up arrangements that cover the provision of emergency accommodation when needed, that ensure the B&Bs are not used for looked after children and those leaving care.
Leaving care managers should ensure, if B&Bs are the only way to meet a young person’s needs because they wish to remain in a particular geographical location, a small family run B&B is considered, and it must be checked and vetted in advance by the leaving care service.

**Practice example**

*Middlesbrough* is a unitary authority with approximately 25 young people leaving care every year. Middlesbrough has developed a B&B protocol that requires accommodation to be provided to be compliant with Fitness Standard, 1989 Local Government and Housing Act Section 604 and 352.

**Contact** jane_young@middlesbrough.gov.uk

There is evidence that for care leavers stability of placements on leaving care is particularly important for improving their life chances. One study, which followed up a sample of 106 young people leaving care, found that: ‘housing emerged as a critical area for leaving care services and one in which positive post care intervention can make a significant difference. How young people fared in housing was not greatly associated with past events in their lives and was much more closely linked to events after leaving care’.  

**Practice example**

*Barnsley* is a unitary authority that has approximately 15 young people leaving care very year. Barnsley has developed B&B standards which have a risk assessment linked to the health and safety of the accommodation.

**Contact** kathryn.williams@nch.org.uk

Checklist for placing a young person in emergency accommodation:

- Has a risk and needs assessment for that young person’s placement been carried out?
- Has the most appropriate accommodation been identified based on the assessment of the young person as set out in their care or Pathway Plan?
- Is the location of the accommodation suitable in relation to existing social and other networks, e.g. college?
- What is the suitability of the other residents?
- What support is provided by the organisation or individual?
- Are there any aids, adaptations or other requirements necessary if the young person has a disability?
- Are meals provided or there is access to cooking facilities?
- What are the specific cultural or religious requirements of the young person?

Once accommodation has been identified a needs and risk assessment and a support plan for that young person should be drawn up, bearing in mind that additional support may be needed, including access to staff on a 24-hour basis.

54 *Young people leaving care: a study of outcomes and costs:* Dixon et.al. 2004, University of York.
Some care leavers may require emergency accommodation because they have not managed the challenges of shared living, e.g. shared supported housing or living alone in self contained accommodation.

Directors of children’s services and housing departments should ensure there is a range of emergency accommodation, including properties that allow for some degree of self-containment.

Practice example

Leeds is a unitary authority with approximately 120 young people leaving care every year. Leeds has a range of emergency accommodation including three private providers, Nightstop provision provided by Barnados and some hostel accommodation provided by the local authority.

Contact paul.skidmore@leeds.gov.uk

Care leavers can be less equipped to manage in emergency accommodation and will often be less able to rely on support from family and friends. If they are required to leave the emergency accommodation during the day, they may have fewer places to go than other young people, and where food is not provided it may be difficult for them to purchase healthy cooked food on a budget.

The social worker should ensure that the risk and needs assessment and the support plan acknowledge that the young person could require a high level of emotional support during this time. If food and cooking facilities are not provided, any allowance the young person receives should take into account of the fact that they will have to purchase prepared food and their support plan should emphasis how they can eat healthily.

The social worker should work with the young person to identify opportunities for meaningful occupation as part of the support planning process.

Care leavers are usually in contact with a number of statutory and voluntary services and moving into emergency accommodation may mean that their needs change.

Leaving care managers should ensure there is a process in place so that all relevant organisations are informed when the young person moves into emergency accommodation.
**Good practice case study**

**Hertfordshire** is a two-tier area with approximately 110 young people leaving care every year. Hertfordshire Young Homeless Group (HYHG) have managed a crash pad scheme for five years for vulnerable 16/17 year olds and have just negotiated that the crash pad also be used for care leavers 18+ to reduce the use of B&B. It is funded by the ten district councils whose aim is to have at least two crashpad places in each district council.

The young person is provided with an evening meal, a private bedroom and breakfast. They are not given a key and they have to leave when the host goes out (usually to work). They have use of bathroom and laundry facilities. Young people are referred by the care leavers’ accommodation manager, and the crashpad scheme will have a copy of the Pathway Plan.

The project consists of an assistant manager and two part-time crashpad officers. The support to the young people is provided by a floating support worker. The project provides a 24-hour on call number for the hosts. Hosts are paid expenses of £22 a night; this varies if the young person does not want a meal, etc. There are standard crashpad rules that can be added to by the host.

Hosts are recruited mainly through word of mouth. Potential hosts complete an application. They have two interviews, an enhanced CRB check and require two references. All adults in the household are interviewed and require an enhanced check with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and all under 18s are spoken to. The house is health and safety checked in the first instance then six-monthly thereafter, and CRB checks are repeated every two years. Hosts are supported by crashpad staff and have access to training, including working with care leavers.

**Contact** tj.nicholls@hyhg.org

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**Additional resources and web links**

- **NCAS resources**
  - [www.leavingcare.org/professionals/whoarewe/projects/accommodation/operational](http://www.leavingcare.org/professionals/whoarewe/projects/accommodation/operational)

- **National Youth Homelessness Scheme**
  - Communities and Local Government
  - [www.communities.gov.uk/youthhomelessness/accommodation/emergencyaccommodation/](http://www.communities.gov.uk/youthhomelessness/accommodation/emergencyaccommodation/)

- **Shelter**
  - Safe and Well — good practice for workers on looked after children who run away
  - [england.shelter.org.uk/shop/publications/good_practice/reports/safe_and_well](http://england.shelter.org.uk/shop/publications/good_practice/reports/safe_and_well)

- **Homeless pages list of resources on direct access hostels**
Young people take many different accommodation pathways when leaving care, and like Steven’s scenario in the introduction, may utilise a number of the accommodation models outlined in this guide. What is important is that the journey that young people embark on when leaving care and becoming an adult results in a positive housing outcome. Suitable and stable accommodation will enable young people to develop other areas of their life, e.g., social networking, education, employment and training. Accessing and maintaining safe and suitable accommodation will ensure that young people feel valued and significant members of their community and wider society. Being a parent is a critical role in supporting young people in navigating their transition to adult life; being a corporate parent is no less significant but requires more effort and co-ordination. Those who are involved in ensuring that care leavers achieve good housing outcome should not underestimate the importance of their roles in shaping these young people’s lives.

This guide has aimed to identify the unique position of those leaving care, outlining the key issues affecting care leavers and what local authorities, housing and support providers and those supporting young people need to do to address these. It has not been possible in this publication to outline all the good practice that local authorities, third sector providers and others are involved in to improve accommodation for young people leaving care. The aim has been to highlight some of the ways in which local authorities and their partners have risen to the challenge of enhancing accommodation for this group of young people. Research has identified that housing for young people continues to be insufficient to meet their needs; however, most of those leaving care do not have the option to remain at home until either their circumstances or the housing environment improves. While local authorities are reporting increases in the numbers of care leavers aged 19 in suitable accommodation,\(^55\) the impetus should not be lost to ensure that each young person leaving care accesses and maintains settled accommodation.

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\(^{55}\) See Section one of this guide for local authorities reporting requirement on care leavers in suitable accommodation.
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NCAS is part of the national charity Catch22.