

# Islington Joint Housing Protocol for Care Experienced Young People 2024 - 2027

<b>POLICY NAME</b>	Joint Housing Protocol for Care Experienced Young People		
<b>Document Description</b>	This protocol outlines how Islington Housing, Children’s Services and other key agencies each play a full role in providing the resources and support to care experienced young people to support a successful transition to independent living.		
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In Islington, we refer to our young people as care experienced young people. The term “care leaver” is used in this document where other documents/publications are referred to and they use this terminology.

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## **1. Introduction**

This is a protocol between Children's Social Care and Housing Services covering the arrangements for care experienced young people to transition successfully into independent living. The protocol sets out how the services will work together to assess housing options and support care experienced young people into appropriate accommodation and ensure the effective management of housing crises for young people when they occur. It seeks to proactively identify care experienced young people at risk of homelessness and act to prevent it. Where care experienced young people do become homeless, the protocol seeks to ensure a swift, safe and integrated response.

Our Corporate Parenting Strategy and Plan 2024-2026 takes most seriously its corporate parenting responsibilities and emphasises the collective responsibility of all elected members, council staff and partner agencies to provide the best possible support and safeguarding to children in care and those leaving care. Our priorities for children and care experienced young people are:

We will make every effort to help young people remain living with their foster carers after 18 and up to the age of 21 if they wish to do so – called “staying put”.

Once a young person leaves school, we will help them to make the most of their opportunities in training, further education and employment. They will have a personal advisor to help them to become independent and access to support from our Virtual College. Care experienced young people can continue with this support up until the age of 25 if they wish to do so.

We will ensure our care experienced young people are given as much help as possible to find suitable housing. Our housing allocations scheme gives care experienced young people who can manage a tenancy additional priority, the ability to bid for a social housing property (typically a one-bedroom flat or studio in Islington) through our choice based letting scheme. Eligible care experienced young people will also receive one supported choice offer for social housing which could be a studio or one bedroomed flat. Once a property is secured, they will be supported to move and settle into their new home, with provisions made to ensure they're happy, safe and are able to sustain their tenancy in the longer term.

We will help our care experienced young people learn the practical skills needed to live independently, such as managing budgets and applying for jobs. We will not expect them to leave care before they are able to move on.

Young people will continue to receive advice as they gain independence; developing personal resilience as they journey into adulthood.

Moving forward from Local Authority care is a particularly important and sometimes a challenging transition. Care experienced young people should expect the same level of care and support that others would expect from a reasonable parent. Islington

Council is responsible for their care and should make sure that they are provided with the opportunities they need. It is important to remember that there is no one appropriate pathway for young people to move to independent living. Leaving care too early presents looked after young people with significant challenges which will impact on their life chances. Care experienced young people, like all young people, will make mistakes and require support to learn from their experiences. Young people leaving care may need longer to achieve some of their goals than their peers who have not been in care.

Care experienced people have consistently been found to have much poorer outcomes than those of their peers, in terms of educational achievement, progression to higher education, involvement in the criminal justice system, higher rates of homelessness and of mental health difficulties. The extra risk of premature death rose for care leavers from 40% in 1971 to 360% in 2011. Care experienced young people are also more likely to experience an unnatural death (suicide, violent death, accident). We are determined to make a difference and address the inequalities some care experienced young people can face.

Good housing underpins success in other areas of life. Secure, safe and stable accommodation is an essential building block for success and achievement in education, training and employment, and has a direct impact on emotional health and wellbeing. It is therefore essential that a multi-agency approach is adopted when securing accommodation for care experienced young people; agencies must work together to meet their statutory duties and corporate parenting responsibilities, in order to provide a safe and supportive pathway to independent living.

Islington Council adopts the principle that all care leavers are to be presumed as being in 'priority need' under homelessness legislation until the age of 25. This also applies to Qualifying young people who will be nominated for their own tenancy when they are ready but will not have access to the direct offer scheme and will need to bid as other residents who have priority need do.

Islington Council also adopts the principle that no care leaver should be presumed to be 'intentionally homeless' under homelessness legislation until the age of 25.

We are committed to lifelong corporate parenting and ensuring that care experienced adults continue to receive bespoke support from Islington Council including those aged 25 years and older.

Whilst we cannot provide the same level of support for young adults aged 25+ our offer encourages them to call, text, WhatsApp or email their last worker if they still work for Islington or contact any of our teams on duty. We will offer information, advice and guidance and someone to talk to and work to signpost them to other services if more in depth support is required. We also want to hear positive news from our young people, e.g. if they have had a baby, passed their driving test or got a new job. We are in the process of setting up a service for care-experienced people aged 25 and over, with proposals that it includes community hubs, peer support, advice on debt management and signposting to activities and charitable organisations. Additionally, we are developing our offer to care experienced parents.

Whilst residing in social housing, care experienced young people also have access to a housing tenancy officer to support them with specific issues that may arise from living in social housing and or if they are experiencing any issues with their property (e.g. disrepair). These tenants can be provided additional support to particularly in the first 6 months of their tenancy to help them to learn the necessary skills to maintain their tenancy. The council's tenancy officers can also co-ordinate support where relevant if the young person experiences issues stemming from anti-social behaviour.

All Housing officers will receive additional training on supporting care experienced adults. In cases where tenancies are at risk, a panel of senior officers at the Care experienced and Housing Panel will ensure that discussions take place with relevant professionals to ensure that all support possible is put in place to reduce the risk of homelessness for young adults in both Council and Housing Association properties (see Appendix 2).

Care experienced young people need to be well prepared to live independently and their housing needs must be addressed before they leave care via pathway planning and joint assessment. We are therefore proud to publish this protocol and will ensure that Children Services, Islington Housing and other key agencies each play a full role in providing the resources and support to care experienced young people.

This protocol will also ensure that every effort is made to avoid pursuing the homeless route which is not ideal when assessing and meeting the housing needs of care experienced young people.

## **2. Key legislation, policies and protocols**

Please see Appendix One for details and links to legislation that impacts on this policy.

This protocol should be read in conjunction with the following strategies, policies and protocols which inform our practice and support in relation to care leavers:

### **Housing**

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy

### **Children's Social Care**

Leaving care Policy

Staying Put policy

Islington Progression to Adulthood Multi-Agency Transition Protocol

Independent Futures Young Person's Leaving Care offer

### **Adults Social Care**

Shared lives Scheme

The protocol has also been developed taking account of the [Joint housing protocols for care leavers: good practice advice](#)

## The Local Offer

All local authorities have a legal obligation to support young people making a transition from care to independence. Local authorities are required under section 2 of the CSWA to publish a local offer, which sets out the services and the support available for care leavers.

Our local offer provides information about the statutory entitlements for care experienced young people as well as any discretionary support available. It sets out how care experienced young people are supported to access suitable accommodation, including the support available from housing services. This Joint housing protocol is aligned with the local offer and will help to ensure that the commitments to support care leavers to access and sustain accommodation are met.

Young people have been consulted with in developing our Local Offer on Housing.

### **3. Aims and Objectives**

The protocol sets out the processes that the council will follow to support care experienced young people to transition to independent living and avoid homelessness. This joint protocol is an opportunity to bring together staff from across services and to build shared responsibility for supporting care experienced young people through a successful transition to adulthood and independent living.

#### Aims

- To ensure the effective discharge of corporate responsibilities between Housing and Children's Services by jointly addressing the diverse accommodation needs of young people leaving care in Islington.
- To prevent care experienced young people from becoming homeless.
- To support young people to become responsible and successful tenants.
- Due to the diverse needs of care experienced young people and the way in which these will change over time, a range of accommodation options will be required, for example, staying put, supported lodgings, semi-independent/supported accommodation and independent tenancies.
- Ensure all officers using this protocol are mindful of the roles and responsibilities of organisations working with young people and the need for multi-agency working to secure positive outcomes.
- The protocol will therefore work at a number of levels:
  - Undertaking joint assessments of individual housing need.
  - Monitoring and reviewing the accommodation needs of care experienced young people.

- Ensuring that the right housing option is given to a care experienced young person recognising their individual wishes but also understanding the provision available of different accommodation types.
- Joint work to ensure that young people are accommodated in safe environments which meet health, safety and wellbeing requirements.
- Ensure that there is minimal use of bed and breakfast accommodation for care experienced young people in crisis situations.
- Ensuring that holistic tenancy sustainment support is available for all care experienced young people for as long as necessary.

### Objectives

- To jointly assess and meet the diverse housing and support needs of young people leaving care, through the application of a clear consistent process.
- To ensure care experienced young people achieve a successful transition into independent living through support, preparation, and provision of suitable accommodation.
- To work closely together to establish a common database of housing resources and service provision for young people.
- To identify gaps in service provision for young people and to work together with other agencies to address these gaps, feeding information into the relevant strategies.
- To reduce the likelihood of a care experienced young person becoming homeless.
- To jointly ensure that all staff are aware of the housing needs of young people leaving care and the obligations of each agency to address these needs.
- To ensure that the accommodation needs of young people entering and discharged from custody are adequately planned for.

#### **4. Who does this policy apply to?**

The local authority is the corporate parent of Children in Care and therefore has a legal and moral duty to provide the kind of support that any good parent would provide to their own children. This is a legal responsibility which extends to all departments within Islington Council.

All local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure all eligible and relevant care experienced young people are placed in suitable accommodation when leaving care. This protocol applies to this cohort of young people.

The definitions are:

#### Eligible child

A child aged 16 and 17 who have been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who are still looked after.

### Relevant child

A 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. This also includes young people who were detained (e.g., in a youth offending institution or hospital) when they turned 16 but immediately before that were looked after.

### Former relevant child

A young person (YP) over 18 who was previously 'eligible' or 'relevant' (unless they returned to the care of their family for six months or more before they turned 18 and we do not have a care order for them). Local authorities support this group at least until age 21, or some duties until age 25.

### Qualifying young person

A YP is a qualifying young person if they were in care between the ages of 16 and 17 for less than 13 weeks before their 18th birthday or they were looked after before they left care when a special guardianship order was made.

### Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC)

Under the Children Act 1989, asylum applicants below the age of 18 who arrive in the UK without close adult family members, either accompanying them or already in the UK who they can join, may be provided a service by the local authority social services departments, regardless of immigration status. This may be under s.17 of the Children Act 1989, and therefore the young person may or may not be looked after. All UASC in Islington under the age of 18 are looked after.

### Unaccompanied young people that are former relevant children

When an unaccompanied and separated child that is an eligible or relevant child reaches 18 and they are still deemed as asylum seekers, the local authority has the duty to assist them as a Former Relevant Child to the extent that her/his welfare requires it, and this includes the duty to provide accommodation.

### Unaccompanied young people who are not former relevant children

If the unaccompanied and separated child reaches the age of 18, and is not a Former Relevant Child, any duty to accommodate will fall to the UKBA, unless s/he is in need of care and attention and is 'destitution plus', when social services would have a duty to accommodate under section 21 of the National Assistance Act 1948.

Asylum seekers are not eligible for homelessness assistance from the Local Authority under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 unless granted some form of leave to remain that makes them eligible (e.g. humanitarian protection). If their asylum claim is accepted, they are granted refugee status and become eligible for homelessness assistance from the local authority.



## Children from the European Economic Area

The UK residence rights and immigration requirements for European Economic Area (EEA) nationals and their family members have significantly changed following the UK's departure from the European Union (EU). From 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021, new immigration and eligibility rules apply.

EEA nationals and their family members who did not apply to the EU Settlement Scheme before the end of the grace period (30 June 2021) will now be unlawfully present in the UK and at risk of losing access to benefits, employment, and other entitlements, although may be able to make a late application if they can show that they have a reasonable excuse for missing the deadline. People with pending EU Settlement Scheme applications should be able to retain their entitlements whilst they are waiting for a decision.

## Children who resided in the UK before 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020

The Withdrawal Agreement protects the rights of EEA citizens and their family members who were lawfully residing, or frontier working, in the UK before 11pm on 31 December 2020, including access to social housing and homelessness assistance. They will need to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) before the deadline of 30 June 2021 to continue residing in the UK.

Those granted settled status under the EUSS will have the same access to social housing and homelessness assistance as comparable British citizens. They should be eligible provided they can demonstrate habitual residence in the Common Travel Area, under provisions in Regulation 3(c) and Regulation 5(1)(c) of the Eligibility Regulations.

Those granted pre-settled status will be eligible if they meet the eligibility rules under Regulation 4 and Regulation 6 of the Eligibility Regulations:

- Regulations 4(1) and 6(1) which prescribe the classes of persons from abroad who are to be treated as ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation or for homelessness assistance, respectively; and
- Regulations 4(2) and 6(2) which prescribe the classes of people from abroad not subject to immigration control who are to be treated as eligible for an allocation of social housing and homelessness assistance.

## Children moving to the UK from 1 January 2021

Newly arriving EEA citizens, moving to the UK from 1 January 2021, will have the same access to social housing and homelessness assistance as non-EEA migrants, unless they are a family member joining an EEA citizen who was residing in the UK by 31 December 2020.

All non-British nationals (excluding Irish citizens) who arrive in the UK from 1 January 2021 will be able to apply for an immigration status under the new points-based immigration system. They will require leave to enter or remain in the UK and will

generally have no recourse to public funds, as is currently the case now for other third country nationals. This means they will not be eligible for an allocation of social housing or homelessness assistance, unless covered by the exemptions in our Eligibility Rules (for example, having a refugee status), or until they are eligible and are granted indefinite leave to remain (typically after 5 years continuous residence in the UK).

## **5. Helping care experienced young people prepare for independent living**

A key principle of corporate parenting is a responsibility to prepare children and care experienced young people for adulthood and independent living. Care experienced young people who are well prepared and supported through the transition will have greater resilience and be less likely to become homeless after they leave care. There will be a need to build personal and emotional resilience as well as practical knowledge and skills, such as financial confidence, budgeting skills, access to welfare benefits, tenancy rights and responsibilities.

### Children Looked After Teams

The children looked after teams support children and young people in care, until they have finished their GCSE's which is usually around the age of 16. The social workers are responsible for all aspects of the young person's care, including annual reviews, health, education and future planning. In the Children with Disability Team cases are joint worked with Independent Futures from the age of 17 when a YPA is allocated.

### Independent Futures

Independent Futures support young people leaving care. Depending on the young person's support needs, this can be up to the age of 25. The teams consist of Social Workers and Young People's advisors (YPA) who help young to prepare to live independently and offer advice and support as they leave care. Young people transition to this team from the children looked after teams. PAs get involved in discussions about young people's needs and ensure they have an up-to-date Pathway Plan, putting in place the support young people are entitled to at the earliest appropriate stage.

### Assessment of independent living skills.

Young people will be helped to develop skills, attributes and resources that they will need to live independently. Assessment of independent living skills will start when the young person is 16 and continue until it is thought that the young person is ready for independence. There are different ways in which young people's independent living skills can be assessed and supported. Foster carers, social workers, personal advisor and key workers need to be creative in thinking about what style of learning fits a young person and use this to think of ways in which a young person's independence is going to be assessed. This can include but is not limited to the Steps to Independence assessment tool, use of the Move in Manual, observations of the young person, progress of the young person, and how much support a young person needs to complete daily living tasks.

Care experienced young people attend an Independence Skills Boot Camp led by young people to help prepare them for managing their tenancy. They may also be encouraged to attend other specific workshops to help them develop the necessary skills to hold down a tenancy including avoiding rent arrears, paying bills and budgeting.

## **6. Accommodation options for care experienced young people**

The Secretary of State for the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities and the Secretary of State for Education consider that all young people leaving care should have safe and appropriate accommodation to meet their needs.

A young person's housing options will be considered on an individual basis and based on an assessment of need. For each of the potential options listed below a young person will be supported by their Social worker / YPA to make relevant applications.

### Staying put

A staying put arrangement is when a child who is living with a foster family stays on living with that family after their 18th birthday. Local authorities have a duty to advise, assist and support such arrangements where a young person and their foster carer has expressed an interest in entering such an arrangement and where this would be consistent with the young person's welfare.

Some young people may choose to remain living with their foster carer and a staying put arrangement will be arranged by the CLA service as part of the process for preparing the young person to leave care. Personal advisors should refer to the "Staying put" policy for further information on the nature of the arrangements and their role in supporting this.

Young people living in staying put arrangements will still be subject to a form of assessment to establish their readiness for independence and foster carers will be responsible for carrying out this assessment with the young person.

### Friends or Family

Some care experienced young people choose to return to live with immediate or extended family when they leave care. A 'friends or family' arrangement can be an option for some young people. This arrangement can be a temporary one, acting as a bridge to the next accommodation, or as a longer-term solution, depending on what is right for the young person. Support can be provided to the young person and their family to build and maintain positive relationships, including access to mediation or family group conferencing services.

### The HASS Pathway

The HASS Pathway currently has 99 beds plus 1 emergency bed spread across the 3 different stages of assessment, progress and move through. Assessment and progression provisions (57 beds) provide placements to young people aged 16+ and move through

provisions (42) which are for young people aged 18+. At each stage in the pathway, young people's readiness for independence is assessed and they are supported to acquire the skills needed to either move on to the next stage or be nominated for their council tenancy.

### The Adult Pathway

Some young people may have extra needs making them more vulnerable and unable to develop essential skills for independent living while they are in the YPP. Where this is the case, the young person can be referred to the Adult Pathway via Islington Learning Disabilities Partnership (ILDPP) Transitions Team or the Pathway to Transition Team where they will continue to be supported and helped to develop independence skills.

### Shared Lives

Shared Lives Islington is an adult placement scheme designed to extend the range of residential services, by providing a more personal form of care in the family home of an adult placement carer. The aim of the scheme is to provide accommodation, care and support for a vulnerable adult in a safe, appropriate manner in a family setting. It also offers a long-term placement for people who wish to live with a family as part of the community and as an alternative to living in a large residential home, hospital setting, or alone.

The scheme is open to young adults/adults, aged 16 years or over with a learning disability, recovering mental health need, physical or sensory disability or someone who needs help because they are an older person.

### Private and Voluntary Supported accommodation

There are a proportion of young people whose needs may not be met within the HASS or adult pathway but still require support before taking on their own tenancy. The decision to commission a placement out of the pathway is made by the Assistant Director of Corporate Parenting.

### Social Housing

Applications for social housing are based on Islington's Housing Allocation Scheme. Applicants need to be aged 18 or over and meet with the eligibility criteria to join the council's Housing Register. Our Housing Allocation Scheme gives care experienced young people aged 25 or under who can manage a social housing tenancy additional priority through an award of points. These young people are then able to bid for a one-bedroom flat or studio in Islington through our the Council's Choice Based Lettings Scheme.

Once a young person is assessed as ready for an independent tenancy their YPA will complete a housing nomination form which is signed off by the Service Manager for Independent Futures, our leaving care service. The Young Person with support from their YPA and/or keyworker will complete the online application to join the Housing register.

They will need the below to complete the application form:

- Addresses for the last 5 years
- Full names and dates of birth for everyone in the household who will be moving
- Immigration status of everyone in your household
- Details of your income
- Medical conditions or disabilities of everyone in the household
- Due date if the young person is pregnant

Once all documents are received, the Housing Needs team will allocate a housing officer to process the young person's housing application. Care experienced young people will receive a minimum of 190 bidding points for social housing which is managed by Islington Council or a Housing Association. Young people can then bid each week when properties are released on the Islington Home Connections website.

Former Relevant Care experienced Young People will receive one supported choice offer for social housing which could be a studio or one bedroomed flat. This could be an Islington Council or a Housing Association owned property. If this offer is not accepted, the young person would have to continue to bid until they are secure a property through the bidding process. If the young person is shortlisted to view a property, they would be informed of a viewing date. To ensure success, young people should be accompanied by their YPA on a viewing to potential properties.

Young people will be prioritised for their supported choice offer according to the date they were nominated. Young people between the ages of 18-21 will also be prioritised on the list if they are in Education, Employment or Training unless they are unable to because, for example, they are parents or have mental health difficulties or disabilities. The Assistant Director of Corporate Parenting or Director of Children's Services may prioritise other young people in exceptional circumstances because of need. The Service Manager for Independent Futures will also ensure that young people are not given direct offers that would not meet their needs.

All Council and most Housing Association tenancies offer an introductory tenancy for the first 12 months, so if any of the tenancy conditions are breached, for example getting into rent arrears, the young person may face eviction. If after these 12 months there have been no issues, the tenancy will usually become an assured or secure tenancy.

Young people will receive a settling in grant of £3000 for essential items when they move into their own home. They will also be supported with move in expenses such as connection fees for a gas cooker and removal costs up to £750. Housing offers a carpet scheme which allows the cost of the carpet to be spread out over 5 years, with the instalments added to the rent payment. The Resident Support Scheme can provide community care grants for people moving into their new homes, providing a bed, mattress and 2 to 3 essential large items (i.e. washing machine, fridge freezer, cooker, two-seater sofa) once the available settling in grant has been used to buy 1 to 2 of them.

All care experienced young people should be awarded "enhanced tenant" status. This means that they will be given priority status for any repairs that the council or Housing Association is responsible for. The earliest possible appointment will be offered and moved forwards if another slot becomes available.

The eligibility for the Islington handyperson service should also be widened to include care experienced young people. The service offers a range of minor repairs and maintenance jobs free of charge.

For repairs that tenants are responsible for, tenants can find and pay for their own contractor to do the work, or the council might be able to do the repair for a charge. Care experienced young people will be given a 20% discount on charges for tenant-responsibility repairs.

All Council and Housing Association properties offered to care experienced young people will come with fresh flooring and paint. Young people may have a choice on the flooring considering its impact on the other neighbours for example wood flooring can increase noise levels.

96 one bedroom or studio properties are allocated to care experienced young people annually. This may mean that young people may have to wait for 6 months to a year for their direct offer. Young people living in supported accommodation who are ready to move into their permanent accommodation may need to move into private rented sector accommodation (PRS) or temporary accommodation (TA) whilst they wait. UASC still seeking asylum and status in this country may move out of supported accommodation to TA whilst waiting for a decision to be made.

The first deposit and first month's rent will be paid by the Housing Department, for young people moving into private rented sector accommodation that young people do not need to pay back.

We have recently obtained funding from central government for an additional 20 properties to be bought back into Council ownership in Islington. These will be rented to young people as Temporary Accommodation. This will mean young people can be offered property with rent set at social housing rates. Young people can remain living in these properties until they receive their permanent direct offer.

### Private rented accommodation

Some young people may choose to obtain a tenancy with a private landlord because the offer does not meet their needs or because they have chosen to live outside of Islington and are not eligible for housing in that area.

Where possible and if Islington is in support of this arrangement, the personal advisor must be satisfied that the landlord is of good character and that the accommodation is safe and suitable for the young person. The care experienced service will support the young person to enter into an agreement with the landlord to secure the tenancy and agree any additional support the young person may need. The Housing Department will pay an incentive to the landlord as well as first month's rent in advance which would not need to be paid back by the young person. This would be paid directly to the landlord if satisfied with the tenancy agreement.

A housing officer will need to visit the property to check on all aspects of suitability and discuss the matter with the young person and their manager or senior if there are any issues of concern. When considering suitability, personal advisors should consider:

- the facilities and services provided
- state of repair
- safety
- location
- support
- tenancy status
- financial commitments and affordability for the young person

Alternatively, Islington's Temporary accommodation Team can support care experienced young people and personal advisors to source accommodation in the private sector. These properties would also be inspected beforehand to make sure they meet minimum standards on size and layout of the property.

The applicant's income will determine what areas they can move to and properties are available across London. The team can make up to 2 reasonable offers of accommodation on their lettings scheme.

### **Support when you move into your home**

Young people are offered floating support when they move into their new home, to help them manage the responsibilities of a tenancy whilst they settle into their home. If more intensive support is needed young people can access Next Steps which will work with young people living in temporary accommodation. The service will offer a range of group and one-to-one activities to support young people to successfully gain and maintain their tenancies, develop life skills and talents, and promote overall well-being. It offers practical support with moving into and furnishing new homes and moving belongings and ensuring the home is safe.

### **The House Project**

The House Project Islington supports care experienced young people to prepare to live independently and work towards getting their own property and making it their home. The House Project runs two cohorts a year. There are 10 young people aged between 17 and 18 selected for each cohort. Young people are supported by the House Project team to complete an Independence Programme that involves group activities, trips, workshops, and one-to-one mentoring. The Programme covers practical skills like cooking and budgeting, but it is also about supporting young people to build their confidence and creative talents.

The House Project tends to suit young people who want to:

- Build their support networks
- Meet new people
- Improve their independence skills
- Try new things

Young people who join the House Project can get involved in activities led by the Care Leavers National Movement <https://clnm.co.uk/>. They use their skills as expert advisers to develop campaigns and activities to improve support for all young people leaving care

## **7. Our young people**

### Young people who are parents

Young people who have children can bid on 1- and 2-bedroom properties. They will receive a single two bed supported choice offer of social housing.

Where young people have been supported to access social housing and then subsequently become a parent, they will be eligible for a housing assessment in line with the council's Housing Allocation Scheme. The YPA will support them with this alongside Housing colleagues.

### Young people in university

We have high aspirations for all Islington care experienced young people, and wherever possible and desired by the young person we support them to progress to Higher Education. We want young people to reach their full potential and enjoy the full university experience.

It is important that care experienced young people are supported to financially plan for university. For students, eligibility for housing benefit and universal credit is restricted to certain groups, and therefore alternative financial arrangements need to be made to pay for housing costs, such as, Student Finance.

For young people who are planning to go to university, general advice would be not to request for their long-term accommodation as distance may make it impractical for them to live in their home.

For young people in their final year of university, the allocated YPA should confirm the housing plan with the young person as part of their Pathway Plan meeting in their final year of University. Once a plan has been confirmed, and the young person is ready and wants to return to Islington and have a long-term housing offer, they should be nominated and offered a direct offer.

For young people who go to university and have already been offered and live in their long-term home, the allocated YPA should support the young person to select an appropriate university and course, which they can manage alongside their long-term tenancy. Young people should be supported to fully understand the responsibilities they will have as a student with their own tenancy, such as through attending open days and liaising with student finance.

Young people who do not wish to surrender their tenancy when going to university, will need to ensure that they can manage travelling to their place of study from their home.



### Young people living outside of Islington Local Authority area

The YPA will be required to support care experienced young people in pursuit of their housing options with the local authority where a local connection applies. A young person owed leaving care duties under the Children Act 1989 has a local connection to the area of the children services authority that owed them the duties.

The Homelessness Reduction Act introduced amendments to the way local connection is assessed for care experienced young people who are homeless. Where a care experienced young person is aged under 21 and normally lives in a different area to that of a local authority that owes them leaving care duties and has done for at least 2 years including some time before they turned 16, the young person will also have a local connection in that area. This will entitle the young person to make an informed choice on where they wish to pursue their housing pathway. This should include the YPA contacting the local authority where the young person resides to explore what accommodation options may be available in advance of them leaving care.

Support should be made available to care experienced young people from other areas living in the borough and there will be an expectation to join up with the Parent local authority so that young people receive the support they are entitled to avoid homelessness or rough sleeping. Housing will undertake a joint assessment if required with Children's Social Care and the Local Authority that the care leaver is residing in and this would involve exploring all possible housing options.

### Young people in Armed Forces

Our Housing allocation policy gives additional priority to applicants who are current or previous members of the armed forces and who are in housing need. Where a secure council tenant is enlisted within the armed forces for a period of more than 12 months and would therefore either accumulate rent arrears or possibly lose their tenancy, they can voluntarily give up their tenancy.

### Young people serving a custodial sentence or leaving custody

Our Housing allocation policy gives additional priority to applicants who are leaving prison. Care experienced young people leaving custody will need additional support to secure suitable accommodation on release. If the young person is aged under 25 at the time of release, the YPA will be responsible for ensuring that accommodation needs are identified early and will work with Housing to ensure care experienced young people do not leave custody without an accommodation plan in place. The following public bodies, who may be involved with care experienced young people, are required to notify a housing authority of service users they identify who may be at risk of becoming homeless:

- Prisons
- Youth offending institutions
- Youth justice services
- Probation service
- Social service authorities
- The secretary of State for Defence

At the point of entry into custody, if a young person has a secure tenancy, the YPA will assist the care experienced young person with ensuring that the Universal Credit Rent Element continues to be paid, provided the sentence (custodial) is under 6 months, to ensure easy return upon release.

When a young person has been sentenced to more than 6 months, the Resettlement Team at the prison or young offenders' institution should chair a meeting twelve weeks prior to release, to discuss the young person's release. It is expected that the YPA and other key partners attend the meeting. The discussion should include accommodation options for the young person. The YPA should contact the Resettlement Team if the meeting is not arranged as expected.

If the care experienced young person is a high-risk MAPPA3 offender, one of the options could be a referral to Approved Premises to enhance the efficacy of their Risk Management Plan, although there is no guaranteed availability. This referral should be completed at least three months prior to release, by their Offender Manager/Probation Officer.

The YPA should use the final 3 months of the young person leaving custody to explore all the usual options, for example advice, guidance and offers of suitable accommodation, where appropriate, as for any other care experienced young person.

There will be greater focus on early joined up work to aid pre-release planning. The aim will be to identify suitable and safe accommodation for the young person in advance of their release to avoid the possibility of rough sleeping/street homeless. Temporary accommodation may be used until the young person is assessed as ready to manage permanent accommodation.

### Young People at risk of/involved in Gangs, Offending and Exploitation

Young people who are exploited to engage in offending or who are gang-involved may be at risk of harm to others and still present with a high level of vulnerability to serious youth violence and exploitation.

The Youth Offending Team or probation must always be consulted when a young person is open to their service and needs accommodation. This includes young people at risk of homelessness on release from a custodial setting (see above). The highest priority is always to ensure a young person will be safe, and risk of harm to others is minimised by making adequate checks to ensure that gang involved young people are not placed in the vicinity of rival or other high-profile gang affected areas, or that other very vulnerable young people are not sharing the same placement/accommodation.

The same principal applies to young people who are at a high risk of going missing, child sexual exploitation and other forms of exploitation.

## Pan London Housing Reciprocal

The Pan London Housing Reciprocal supports Londoners with, or owed, a social tenancy who are also at risk of violence in their borough. The scheme is for Londoners affected by:

- Domestic violence and abuse
- Sexual violence and exploitation (including – prostitution and trafficking)
- So called ‘honour’ based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage
- Stalking
- Hate crime
- Serious youth violence

More information can be found on [Pan London Housing Reciprocal - Safer London](#)

## Young people at risk of tenancy breakdown

Islington housing provides a neighbourhood housing officer to all tenants in their secure and flexible tenancies. Areas of support include:

- Supporting with tenancy requests such as successions, mutual exchanges, and home improvements.
- Helping residents achieve improvements to their estates by working with resident groups.
- Supporting residents when they experience problems within the community, such as anti-social behaviour.
- Helping to make sure the area residents live in feels clean and safe.
- Offering advice in the areas of resolving disputes, cost of living worries, and housing options to support tenants to reach their own solutions.
- Supporting with welfare concerns, keeping in mind our most vulnerable residents
- Work with other services to meet resident’s diverse needs such as like cost of living, debt advice.
- If a tenant chooses to move out, offering advice on what they need to do.

Care experienced young people will be flagged on the housing database so that any housing staff can identify that the tenant is a care experienced young person.

A breach of tenancy conditions could lead to formal action being taken to end the tenancy with the service of a notice of seeking possession. Formal action is only proposed after careful consideration and when alternative dispute resolution options have been exhausted. Where a formal notice is being proposed the Neighbourhood Housing Officer, Anti-Social Behaviour Officer or Rental Income Officer will inform the Tenancy Review and Project Officer to enable the case to be taken to the multi-agency housing partnership meeting. The partnership will discuss cases and agree action plans around the young person to try and prevent escalation of any proposed eviction proceedings. If a care experienced young person loses their tenancy under the age of 25 they will not be made intentionally homeless. Alternative accommodation will be sought and if they are assessed as able to manage a tenancy in the future, they could receive a further direct

offer if under the age of 25 or be able to continue to bid if over the age of 25 alongside other priority groups

### **Young People living with arrears**

Living independently is challenging for all young people due to the high costs of living and relatively low incomes. Rent arrears in any form of tenure are a real risk and it is important that the signs that a care experienced young person is struggling are identified at an early stage. The Rental Income Team should advise the allocated YPA and Service Manager of Independent Futures when a young person accrues £500 in rent arrears. Action should then be taken to jointly engage with the young person and put in place steps to reduce the debt.

Some young people may have multiple debts and it is important that they are referred to relevant debt advice services to help them manage their finances. The Assistant Director of Corporate Parenting & Housing Needs should be notified of cases that are complex and are at risk of possession action so that joint action plans at a more senior level to try and prevent escalation of eviction proceedings are agreed.

### **Young people at risk of homelessness**

Everyone deserves a place they can call home and our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024 commits the Council to use its resources and creativity to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring. This vision is underpinned by the following four key priorities which have corresponding actions:

- Preventing: We want to stop people from becoming homeless
- Supporting: We will support those experiencing the crisis of homelessness, helping them to recover and regain their independence
- Tackling the root causes of homelessness: We will address the long-term root causes of homelessness in Camden
- Campaigning: We will use our voice to fight for a national response to the challenges of chronic housing shortage, welfare reform, instability, longer tenancies and homelessness

The strategy identifies care experienced young people as a vulnerable group and that the council will “continue to prioritise prevention services for young people including care leavers, looked after children and unaccompanied asylum seekers.”

Islington’s specialist floating service provide tenants with information, advice and expertise if they are threatened with eviction or requiring support to maintain a tenancy. Tenants typically receive this wraparound financial advice and housing support for up to 2 years, however this can be extended based on need. This will support young people to sustain their tenancy and prevent homelessness.

If the tenancy cannot be sustained and the care experienced young person is at risk of becoming homeless this should be escalated to the Care Experience and Housing Panel. Consideration will be given to the reasons why the care experienced young

person has been evicted and the support that was put in place prior to them losing their home to ensure that such a decision is balanced and references the vulnerabilities and support needs of the young person (see Appendix Two Terms of Reference).

Additionally, there is a duty on specified public bodies (such as CSC) to refer to a housing authority (with consent) any household which is threatened with homelessness or is homeless within 56 days. Where there is a duty to assess a care leaver's housing and other support needs, the Housing Needs service will co-produce and develop a personalised housing plan (PHP) with the young person and ensure the Personal Adviser is involved in the production of the PHP. The production of the PHP, led by the Housing Needs service will be aligned with the council's prevention and relief duties under the Homeless Reduction Act.

When a young person does lose their property after a period of time has elapsed and the young person is able to evidence a significant change in circumstance and behaviour consideration will be given to a 2<sup>nd</sup> chance offer of long-term accommodation. There will be no situation where the Local Authority discharges its corporate parenting responsibilities or housing duty to care experienced young people by deeming them intentionally homeless.

Islington Council commission St Mungo's to deliver the homeless outreach service in the borough, to offer support to anyone met rough sleeping. In the event of the team meeting a vulnerable young person, including a care leaver, they would access immediate accommodation for them by contacting Housing's out of hours on-call system to request emergency temporary accommodation. If under 18 years old, the team would contact Children's Social care (out of hours), to ensure a route away from the street. The team carry out early/late shifts out of hours so would utilise the Council's out of hours system and would make appropriate safeguarding referrals as required.

Islington has a designated young people's supported accommodation pathway, with a specific referrals co-ordinator responsible for overseeing this pathway. Where young people are at risk of eviction from supported accommodation, providers will notify the co-ordinator, in order that alternative accommodation options can be explored in advance of them having to leave the accommodation wherever possible, thus reducing the risk of homelessness and rough sleeping. Additionally, a Housing Prevention outreach worker provides in-reach support into some of the YP services, to support facilitate positive move on.

## **8. Disputes**

There may, on occasion, be disagreement between practitioners in Children Services and those in Housing on how the protocol is being administered or on how a young person is being advised and supported. If these cannot be resolved by team managers, the matter can be escalated to the respective Service Managers or Assistant Directors.. Lessons learnt will be shared with staff in both departments.

## **9. Monitoring and Review**

The implementation of this protocol will be monitored at both an operational and strategic level and will periodically reviewed. Initially this will take place after 6 months thereafter will be reviewed 12 monthly.

At a strategic level, this protocol will be reviewed by the AD Corporate Parenting, Safeguarding and Support, AD Housing Needs and AD Housing Management.

Practically, the review will encompass homelessness presentations, HCLIC datasets, numbers of Duty to refer referrals and other relevant data (including complaints and feedback) to determine the effectiveness of this protocol.

## 10. Appendices

### Appendix One. Legislation that underpins this protocol

#### The following legislation informs this protocol:

- [Housing Act 1996](#) – Part 6 (Allocations) and Part 7 (Homelessness), as amended by the [Homeless Reduction Act 2017](#)
- [The Homelessness \(Priority Need for Accommodation\) \(England\) Order 2002](#)
- [Children Act 1989](#)
- [Children \(Leaving Care\) Act 2000](#)
- [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#)- sections 1, 2 and 3

#### The following is a list of relevant statutory guidance:

- [Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities](#)
- [Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers](#)
- [Children Act 1989: care planning, placement and case review](#)
- [Children Act 1989: transition to adulthood for care leavers](#)
- [Extending Personal Adviser support to age 25](#)
- [Local offer guidance](#)

#### The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) amended the Housing Act 1996, introducing significant new duties for local housing authorities and partners. Particularly relevant for care experienced young people are:

- a duty to provide advice and information on homelessness free of charge to all residents, including advice to meet the needs of care leavers.
- duties to help prevent and relieve homelessness for those who are eligible irrespective of priority need or intentional homelessness. Provision of a Personalised Housing Plan to applicants threatened with homelessness or homeless, which sets out the steps the local authority and applicant will take to prevent or relieve homelessness.
- changes in local connection requirements for care leavers which provide more choice to those who have lived out of the placing authority area, or who are looked after by a county council within two-tier areas.
- a 'duty to refer' placed on specified public bodies, including children's services, where their service users are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

## Children and Social Work Act 2017

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 (CSWA) strengthened the role of local authorities as corporate parents and applies to all local authorities as set out in section 1(3) of the Act.

Corporate parenting means local authorities doing the most they can for looked after children and care experienced young people, to give them the same opportunities as other children and promote the best possible outcome. As a corporate parent we are concerned about those children and care experienced young people as if they were our own.

The Act sets out corporate parenting principles to be applied when supporting children in care and care leavers. In carrying out their functions, the local authority must have regard to the following needs:

- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and care leavers
- to encourage those children and care leavers to express their views, wishes and feelings
- to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and care leavers
- to help those children and care leavers gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
- to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and care leavers
- for those children and care leavers to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
- to prepare those children and care leavers for adulthood and independent living

The DfE statutory guidance on applying corporate parenting principles to looked after children and care leavers stresses the importance of joint working in supporting care leavers to navigate their way through the transition to adulthood:

*“Good preparation, a gradual transition and flexible ongoing support are key to helping care leavers achieve a successful move to independent living. The most effective local authorities establish joint working arrangements between children’s services, housing and other specialist services to help care leavers prepare for the realities of living independently, involve them in planning and decisions about their housing options, ensure suitable housing and support is in place and are ready to respond with contingency arrangements if things do go wrong. (Applying corporate parenting principles to looked after children and care leavers - Chapter 2).”*

The CSWA also extended the provision of Personal Adviser support to care experienced young people up to the age of 25, whether or not they are in education or training, which the care experienced young person can choose to take up. Local authorities have a duty to provide care experienced young people with Personal Adviser support and a pathway plan up to their 21st birthday.



For care experienced young people aged 21 or over the duty to assess needs, and develop and keep under review a pathway plan – apply only where the young person requests support.

It is therefore important that joint housing protocols cover the support available from a local authority area to care experienced young people up to the age of 25.

## **Appendix Two. TOR Care Experience and Housing Panel**

### **Terms of Reference Care Experienced & Housing Panel**

#### **Purpose of the Care Experienced Panel**

The purpose of the Care Experienced Panel is to review referrals for care-experienced people where there is a risk of tenancy enforcement escalation, for e.g. rent arrears, antisocial behaviour or other breach of tenancy conditions. This applies to care experienced young people over the age of 25 and those who may no longer be receiving a service from Independent Futures or leaving care service. The panel should be used as an early intervention tool before escalation occurs and where tenancy sustainment is at risk. This panel should not be used as a last resort.

#### **Objectives of the Care Experienced Panel**

- To review referrals and consider preventative measures to ensure tenancy sustainment
- To consider appropriate support and intervention before further enforcement action is taken
- To seek advice and support from relevant professionals and agencies as required
- To ensure that the needs and personal circumstances of each service user is considered as part of the decision-making process
- Identifying any gaps or service failures and directing action to address these to ensure better outcomes for care experienced service users
- Improve and build on multi-agency collaborative partnerships with the best interest of care experienced service users in mind

#### **Care Experienced Panel Membership**

The task and finish group will be co-chaired by the Assistant Director of Corporate Parenting,  
Assistant Director for Housing Needs.  
Assistant Director for Housing Management

The panel will consist of:  
Homes & Neighbourhoods Improvement Manager  
Service Manager Independent Futures  
Service Improvements Officer  
Head of ASB  
Assistant Director for Integrated Mental Health  
Police/police liaison officer?

## **Panel Attendees**

Professionals working closely with the care experienced service user should also be invited. This list can include but is not restricted to:

Service user's social worker/care coordinator

Mental health practitioner

Probation officer

IDVA

## **Frequency of the Panel**

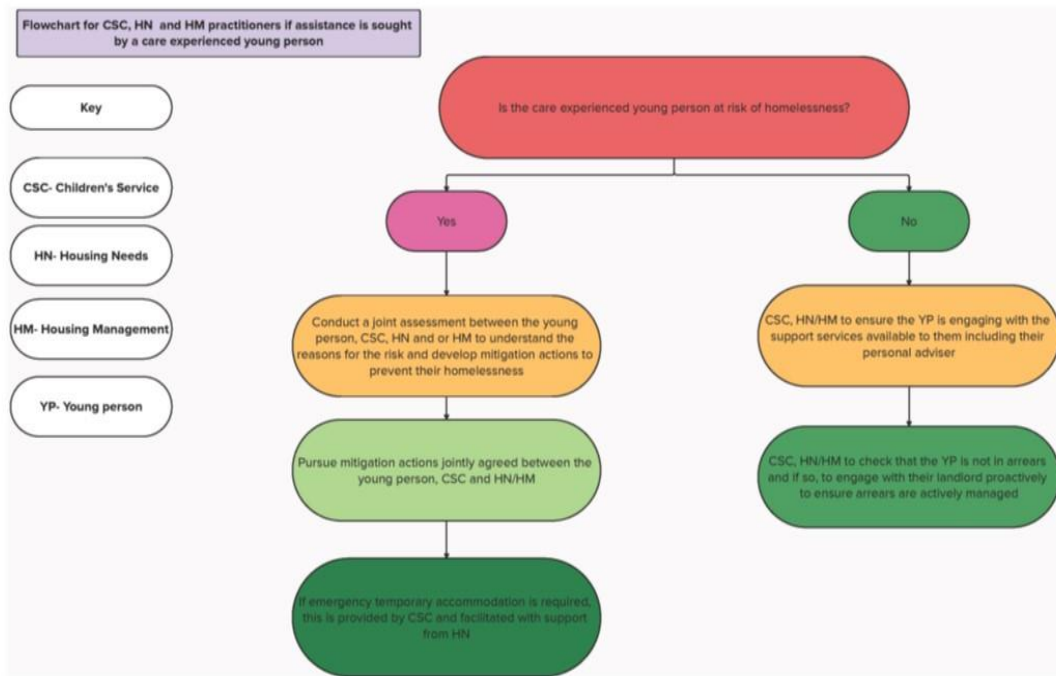
The panel will take place bi-monthly for up to 2 hours as required. Approximately 10-15 mins will be used to discuss each service user.

The Panel will be hybrid.

The agenda will be agreed by the Chair and panel members a week before the panel is due to take place.

The Panel Coordinator/minute-taker to be agreed by the Chair.

## Appendix Three. Flowchart for CSC and Housing Practitioners 2024



## Appendix Four. Independent Futures Housing Flowchart

