

Care leavers accommodation and support framework for Wales

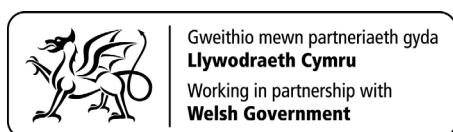
In partnership with



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Acknowledgements

The care leavers accommodation and support framework for Wales is a model which aims to help organisations that support young people as they make their individual journeys towards leaving care in Wales. It is based on the care leavers accommodation and support framework for England (2015), which was produced by Barnardo's and St Basil's and developed collaboratively with a wide range of partners. Together these organisations have pooled their knowledge and ideas about what works well in helping care leavers transition to adulthood. This framework has been adapted for use in Wales by Barnardo's Cymru and Shelter Cymru, with support from the following organisations. We are very grateful to the staff and young people who have taken the time to share their expertise.



The framework is endorsed by:



Children in Wales
Plant yng Nghymru



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Executive summary

Recent legislative change in Wales has led to a strengthening of duties on local authorities to prevent, and address, homelessness more effectively. The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires local authorities to produce a joint strategy between housing and social services to address homelessness. This reinforces the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 requirement that housing and social services work together to meet the needs of young people in care as they move to independent living. The statutory responsibility of social services to provide a pathway plan for all those leaving care – to facilitate their transition to independence – can now, where necessary, include a personal housing plan which focuses specifically on their housing needs.

A key underlying principle of both pieces of legislation is to improve people's wellbeing through early intervention and empowerment. The intention is to implement this via an increased focus on service-user-centred approaches, including the provision of accurate, accessible, timely information, and through encouraging engagement and participation in individual planning. The aspiration is for young care leavers to experience a transition into independent living which is more planned and thought through, and to limit as far as possible the risk of any period of homelessness or the need for emergency accommodation.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is an overarching piece of law which sets out a framework of wellbeing goals, and a set of principles for working together, for specific public bodies including local authorities and local health boards, with the aim of sustainable development.

“Sustainable development” means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the well-being goals.¹

Young people leaving care are more at risk of living in poverty than their peers. They need somewhere safe and suitable to live to help them make a positive transition into adulthood. Good housing plays a critical role in supporting these vulnerable young people to achieve better outcomes, by underpinning success in other areas of life. This framework draws together expertise on providing appropriate accommodation for care leavers, from local authorities, voluntary sector organisations and young people across Wales. The framework has been developed for local authority commissioners, leaving care and housing managers, and for providers of housing and support for young people in Wales. It is intended to be used flexibly to suit local circumstances and needs, and provides a model that local authorities can adapt. It can be used both to help individual young people find the best accommodation locally for them, but also by commissioners to inform housing strategies and the supply of appropriate accommodation.

¹ Welsh Government (2015) *Shared Purpose: Shared Future: Statutory guidance on the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*. Available at: <http://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/160225-spsf-1-core-guidance-en.pdf>, accessed 19 September 2016

There are five stages to the framework, and these reflect the journey of a young person as they leave care:

1. Preparing for the reality of housing options

Young people still in care are given the opportunity to consider their housing options, including getting information about the housing market in their area. They are helped to gain skills necessary for increased independence, including managing a household, finance and budgeting.



2. Planning young people's accommodation and support options with them

When young people are ready to leave care, they are supported in choosing the accommodation that will best suit them, given the constraints on local provision. They are provided with information about their responsibilities as tenants, and are made aware of the consequences of placement breakdown. They are given as much notice as possible for their move out of care, and this includes young people in different settings such as residential care, those in custody, and those with on-going mental or physical health issues.



3. Reducing housing crisis

Some young people will experience problems with their housing and need emergency or short-term alternatives. They need safe and appropriate accommodation options, and to receive support in resolving the cause of the crisis. In Wales, statutory guidance has recently been strengthened to require local authorities to make 'exhaustive efforts' to avoid the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for 16 and 17-year-olds.



4. Accessing housing and support as needed

Young people in different situations will need different types of housing and support, ranging from 24/7 supported housing through to their own independent flat with floating support. Some young people will want to stay in a family environment like supported lodgings. As their needs and circumstances change, young people should be supported to find accommodation that best suits them.



5. Accessing and successfully managing longer-term move-on and support options

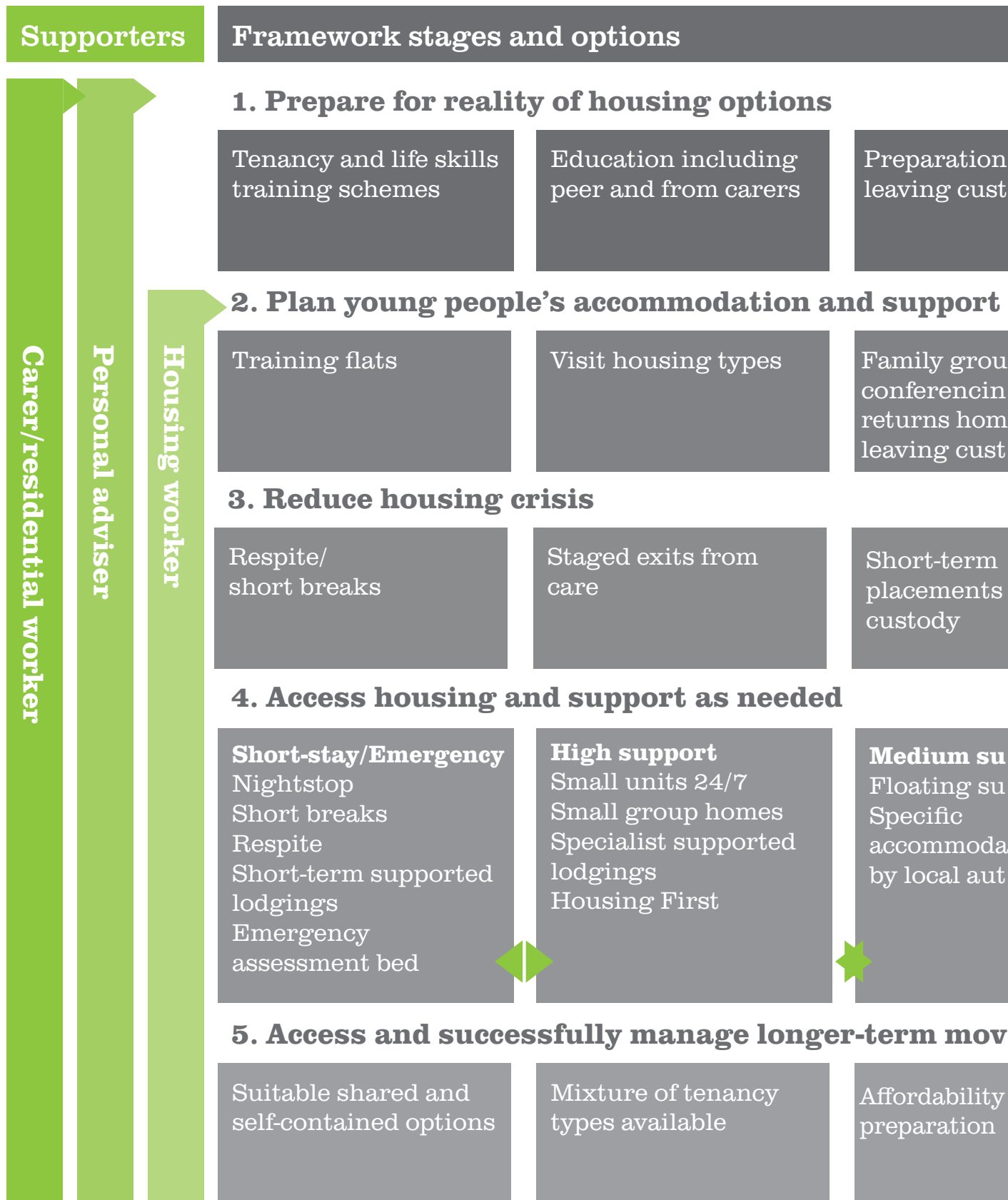
As they become ready, young people will need support to access longer-term housing, such as their own tenancy in private rented or social housing, a shared flat or long-term supported housing. They will need help to understand their options and know where to go if they need extra support in the future.

The framework is based on several key principles which also underpin the corporate parenting role. Young people leaving care should be:

- given as much information, choice and control as possible
- able to make mistakes and never ‘fall out’ of the framework
- helped to succeed
- offered flexible support that adapts to meet their needs
- offered supportive and unconditional relationships
- he shared responsibility of their corporate parent



Care leavers accommodation a




Underlying principles – young people are:

- given a much information choice and control as possible
- able to make mistakes and never 'fall out' of the framework
- helped to succeed

- offered flexible support that adapts to meet their needs
- offered supportive and unconditional relationships
- the shared responsibility of their corporate parent.

nd support framework

		Activity and approach
for ody		Identify and plan with young people on the framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Leaving care 16-18 and 18+ ■ Leaving custody ■ Out of authority ■ UASC/NRPF
options with them		
p g for e and ody	When I'm Ready	Involve young people in decision making and offer housing and support choice
from	Family mediation	Plan early and have contingency plans in place to prevent crises from escalating
pport pport tion leased horities	Low support Shared houses with floating support Peer landlords On-call concierge	Commission a range of housing and support options with access for care leavers
		
move-on and support options		
checks and	Support as needed to set up and sustain tenancy	Develop a range of move-on options Work with landlords to reduce evictions Work with partners to develop a range of housing options

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Introduction

The care leavers accommodation and support framework for Wales is a model which aims to help organisations that support young people in making their individual journeys towards leaving care in Wales. It is based on the care leavers accommodation and support framework for England (2015), which was developed collaboratively with a wide range of partners who pooled their knowledge and ideas about what works well in helping care leavers transition to adulthood.

The framework is written for:

- local authority commissioners
- leaving care managers
- housing managers
- providers of housing and support for young people.

Having somewhere safe and secure to live is central to young people having a positive exit from care. Research (Stein, 2010)² shows that young people highly value having choice about where they will live, and being involved in decisions that will affect them. Young people's involvement in these decisions is a valuable learning experience as they make the transition to adulthood and increased independence. As well as reducing their anxiety about the future and how they will cope, it is also likely to make them more invested in sustaining their housing choice. A secure housing base is also critical to young people's progress in other areas of life, such as education, training or employment, improved mental health, relationships and building of social networks. However, there is no blueprint for success in terms of what needs to happen and when. Each young person's experience of being looked after is different, and their experience of leaving care will also be different.

The transition to adulthood for all young people – including care leavers – is about progression. For care leavers, this may be a series of small or larger steps, both within care and also leaving care and beyond. Some young people may get their own independent accommodation at 18, but they will continue to need support as they develop their skills, learn from experience and react to their changing life circumstances. Realistically, however, most young people at 18 – not just care leavers – will find it difficult to manage their own tenancy successfully even with some support, and any experience of 'failure' so early in their journey to independence can damage them practically and emotionally. As care leavers, young people need support from their corporate parents throughout and beyond this transition.

² Stein, M (2010) *Increasing the number of care leavers in 'settled, safe accommodation'*. Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO). Available at: http://archive.c4eo.org.uk/themes/vulnerablechildren/careleavers/files/increasing_care_leavers_in_safe_accommodation_full_knowledge_review.pdf, accessed 19 September 2016

What brings young people into care?

Currently 53 per cent of children in care in Wales are aged 10 or over, with 17 per cent aged 16 or older in 2015.³ Many adolescents and teenagers become looked after for the same reasons as younger children, but older teenagers are more likely to enter care through the following routes:

- as a homeless 16 or 17-year-old
- as an unaccompanied asylum seeker
- because they were accommodated on remand
- due to safeguarding issues affecting teenagers such as child sexual exploitation.

Young people leaving care have a wide variety of needs and wishes, which will have been influenced both by their childhood experiences of living with their families and also by living in care. For example, young people who have been in care since they were small children will be more familiar with having a social worker, pathway plans and personal advisers, whereas for those entering at 16 or 17 after becoming homeless, all this can seem irrelevant and interfering. The range of young people's pre-care and in-care experiences will mean that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to supporting care leavers. The accommodation framework aims to present a range of options for housing and support that care leavers may need as they move into adulthood. In using this framework, it is helpful to keep in mind the diversity of experience that lies behind 'leaving care'.

Who developed the accommodation framework?

The care leavers accommodation and support framework for Wales is based on the English version⁴ produced in 2015 by Barnardo's and West Midlands-based youth homelessness charity St Basils. The Welsh framework has been adapted by Barnardo's Cymru and Shelter Cymru together with leaving care providers, youth housing providers and Welsh Government representatives. It reflects the specific legislation and rights affecting care leavers in Wales, as well as providing examples that are relevant to their housing experiences. Young people leaving care also contributed their views.

The care leavers accommodation and support framework for Wales is intended to be used alongside Preventing Homelessness and Promoting Independence: A Positive Pathway to Adulthood.⁵

3 Welsh Government (2015) Children looked after at 31st March by age and gender <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue> Accessed June 2016

4 Barnardo's in partnership with St Basils (2015) Care leavers accommodation and support framework. Available at: http://www.barnardos.org.uk/resources/research_and_publications/care-leavers-accommodation-and-support-framework/publication-view.jsp?pid=PUB-2660, accessed 19 September 2016

5 St Basils (2015) Developing Positive Pathways to Adulthood: Supporting young people on their journey to economic independence and success through housing advice, options and homelessness prevention. Available at: <http://gov.wales/topics/housing-and-regeneration/services-and-support/homelessness/youth-homelessness/>, accessed June 2016

New housing legislation provides an opportunity to prevent homelessness among care leavers through improved strategic planning and earlier joint planning linked to pathway planning (Whalen, 2015).⁶ Care leavers and other vulnerable young people aged 18 to 20, and all 16 and 17-year-olds, are a priority needs group under this legislation.⁷ New social services legislation must pay due regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which is enshrined in law in Wales and applies to all young people up to the age of 18.

The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 also has a preventative focus. It aims to improve the wellbeing of those with care and support needs, and like the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 it plans to achieve this by giving people an equal say in the support they receive, and by driving partnership and cooperation in service delivery.⁸ 'Having a good home' is one of the eight elements which make up the statement of what 'wellbeing' means, and around which service delivery and outcomes measurement is focused.

How should the accommodation framework be used?

The framework is not prescriptive but gives a model for how young people can be supported as they leave care. The framework itself is very simple and is represented in the diagram on pages [eight and nine](#). The rest of this report gives background information, examples, checklists and top tips to help you in using the framework. Your own unique set of local services and partnerships – what's working well, your plans and your ideas – can be mapped on to this model. It is yours to use as flexibly as you want to.

For example, you could use the framework:

- to carry out a needs analysis of care leavers in your area
- to review your existing services through a commissioning audit
- to identify your service strengths and gaps
- as a template for service re-design.

The framework identifies five stages that young people may experience as they leave care. The stages are not always sequential and young people may move several times between different stages. They have been identified, however, to help you think through the range of areas in which young people will need support as they leave care.

The stages are:

⁶ Whalen, A (2015) *Provision for Young Care Leavers at Risk of Homelessness*. Public Policy Institute for Wales. Available at: <http://ppiw.org.uk/ppiw-report-publication-provision-for-young-care-leavers-at-risk-of-homelessness/>, accessed 19 September 2015

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Welsh Government (2014) *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014: The Essentials*, p3. Available at: <http://gov.wales/docs/dhss/publications/160127socialservicesacten.pdf>, accessed 19 September 2016

1. Preparing for reality of housing options

2. Planning young people's accommodation and support options with them

3. Reducing housing crisis

4. Accessing housing and support as needed

5. Accessing and successfully managing longer-term move-on and support options

How can children and young people be engaged in using the framework locally?

As you develop the framework locally, a key to real improvement is the involvement of children and young people. Using a participative, service-user-centred approach, as laid out in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 will help you to find out what care leavers want locally, and what (often small) things can make positive differences for them. You can also draw on the wealth of information available in young people's pathway plans. Drawing all of these plans together can help you analyse the strengths and gaps in your current service provision. This approach will also make sure you hear the voices of all care leavers in your area – not just those who are willing to join in with groups. In addition, feedback from local providers and support services will be important too, giving different perspectives on what works well and where there are areas for improvement.

What will make the framework work well?

The framework is based on some underlying principles to give young people the best start possible as they leave care. Although the framework gives practical ideas for delivering good services for young people, the attitude of their corporate parent is key to making it work well.

These principles are that young people leaving care are:

- given as much information, choice and control as possible
- able to make mistakes and never ‘fall out’ of the framework
- helped to succeed
- offered flexible support that adapts to meet their needs
- offered supportive and unconditional relationships
- the shared responsibility of their corporate parent.

The framework also relies on different parts of a local authority working effectively together. Experience from all those already using an accommodation framework demonstrates that effective joint working between Housing, Children’s Services and Supporting People commissioners as well as with health commissioners and providers, education, training and employment agencies, criminal justice partners, the voluntary sector and the private sector, is an essential driver of a successful approach. This is ‘corporate parenting’ in action.





1. Prepare for reality of housing options

Supporters	Framework stages and options	Activity and approach
<div>Carer/residential worker</div> <div>Personal adviser</div>	1. Prepare for reality of housing options <div>Tenancy and life skills training schemes</div> <div>Education including peer and from carers</div> <div>Preparation for leaving custody</div>	Identify and plan with young people on the framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Leaving care 16-18 and 18+ ■ Leaving custody ■ Out of authority ■ UASC/NRPF

‘There needs to be a way of training young people in a way that they engage with it. In the children’s home they used a book which we were supposed to go through... I was really resistant to it and it wasn’t ‘mandatory’.
(Young person, Voices from Care)

‘She’s 16 and got kicked out [from foster care and came into emergency supported lodgings]. She doesn’t know why yet and she can’t cook anything but pot noodles. It’s not fair, you should come from care with at least some basic skills – she doesn’t even know how to use a washing machine.’
(Young person, Barnardo’s Cymru)

Young people in care need relevant and accurate information about what will happen when they leave care, where they might live, and the pros and cons of various options. Foster carers, residential workers, social workers and personal advisers have a vital role to play in preparing young people for the reality of living more independently and making them aware of their housing options when they leave care. This means they will need to ensure that they are properly informed themselves of the housing situation and support available to young people leaving care. The preparation and intended next steps should be written into the young person’s pathway plan.

Looking back, many care leavers have reflected that their expectations about living independently were unrealistic. Most advocate strongly that local authorities should give young people much better information, advice and practical preparation, as well as contingency plans in case things go wrong. An important principle of this framework is its flexibility, allowing young people to move back into more supportive options if they find they are not ready for greater independence.

Because young people who are looked after live in a variety of different arrangements, it is important to make sure they get bespoke information and tailored advice based on their individual circumstances, alongside more general information about housing options. For example, where a young person is going to have a When I am Ready arrangement with their long-term foster carer, or is likely to go to university, there is no real benefit in giving them very detailed information on supported accommodation and tenancies while they are still in care. Should things change, then the level of advice and information can change. Depending on a young person’s circumstances, this preparation could start well before they want to leave care, and should form part of more general life skills training.

Example

The Going It Alone project raises awareness of the realities of youth homelessness and independent living. This award-winning project is funded by Welsh Government and Grŵp Cynefin. The project works in partnership with Cartrefi Conwy, North Wales Housing, Conwy County Borough Council and Denbighshire County Council, and delivers a range of education and support programmes across Conwy and Denbighshire.

The project offers flexible, preventative, educational services to young people (up to age 25) within schools, further education, alternative education and other youth provision, and to vulnerable young people such as care leavers and those living in supported accommodation. Projects range from accredited preventative courses for at-risk young people, to one-off skills workshops. In addition, the project can work one-to-one with young people at high risk of homelessness.

One of the project's recent educational initiatives is its new board game, also called 'Going It Alone', developed by the project in partnership with Grŵp Cynefin, Cartrefi Conwy, North Wales Housing and The Bus Stop Project. Research found that the interaction of playing a board game was more beneficial to engaging young people in learning than the more obvious route of creating a digital game. Developed by the Young Housing Network, all of whom have experienced homelessness themselves, the bilingual game is available for schools and community groups across Wales to access and use as a learning tool.⁹

Gemma Closs-Davies, Going It Alone Project Coordinator, explains:

'Going it Alone is similar to the Monopoly board game in many ways. You travel around the board and interact depending on what scenario card you pick up. You have four pay days and four bill days throughout the game, and you need to manage your money to ensure you have enough to get you around the board.

'Prior to the launch, we've tested the game at a number of pilot sessions, and we've had very positive feedback from young people and practitioners alike.

As the game has been developed by young people who have had real-life experiences of these problems, it includes realistic scenarios that can be used as discussion points. These events created within the game mirror what can happen in real life.'

Other resources have included the original Going It Alone leaflet and signposting card, and the Going It Alone app and website at www.goingitalone.co.uk

⁹ North Wales Housing (2016) *Going it alone – new board game mirrors real life issues facing young people*. Available at: <https://www.nwha.org.uk/news-and-events/news/going-it-alone-new-board-game-mirrors-real-life-issues-facing-young-people/>, accessed 19 September 2016

Example

Start Smart is a peer mentoring programme in Merseyside which helps young care leavers get ready to live independently. Developed and run by Barnardo's, the service trains older care leavers to become peer mentors, through an accredited training scheme. These mentors then support younger adolescents as they take their first steps towards independent living. The programme is supplemented by intensive support from staff to develop wider life and social skills.¹⁰

Example

The Money House – an innovative, Greenwich-based project – promotes a new approach to life skills, helping young people who are leaving care or supported housing to manage their finances as they take on their own tenancies.¹

The Money House is run by Hyde Plus, in partnership with the Royal Borough of Greenwich, Greenwich CAB, Meridian Money Advice, MyBnk and YMCA. The project helps young residents in Greenwich avoid slipping into unmanageable debt – with the associated risks of eviction – and it has been very successful.

From a real flat in Greenwich, trainers deliver an innovative, flexible programme of money management and financial confidence training. Young people take part in interactive learning experiences that simulate 'living at home'. Participants are guided through how to read and understand real utility bills; electric meters; rent letters and tenancy agreements, and are given practical tips to help them maintain their tenancy. The training is interactive and fun, with 98 per cent of young people completing the five-day training.

The project is fully integrated in to Royal Greenwich's homelessness services, and attendance is linked to the housing allocations system, meaning that young people seeking accommodation need to attend to be offered a property.

Results so far have been very positive. An analysis of rent arrears one year on showed that young people who had done The Money House course were three times less likely to be in arrears than those who hadn't,¹² and from a sample of 63 young people who had attended the training, after two years not one had been evicted.

¹⁰ Barnardo's. *Start Smart Wirral* official website. Available at: <http://www.barnardos.org.uk/start-smart-wirral/service-view.htm?id=221639502>, accessed 19 September 2016

¹¹ The Money House. *The Money House* official website. Available at: <https://www.hyde-housing.co.uk/tenants/advice-and-support/money-and-debt-advice/the-money-house/>, accessed 19 September 2016

¹² The Money House (2015) *Back to The Money House: An update on our performance since summer 2014*. Available at: <https://www.hyde-housing.co.uk/media/1353/the-money-house-update.pdf>, accessed 19 September 2016

There are two types of course:

- An AQA-accredited, five-day Money House training course. Young people who complete the course come away with a qualification in Budgeting and Debt Management.
- A one-day Independent Living Money House training course aimed at those who have some experience of managing their own tenancy, but would benefit from additional support.

The social worker or personal adviser will take the lead in information provision on accommodation as part of the pathway plan. However, it is also important for young people to have access to a range of responsive support services in order to prevent and address the risk for homelessness.

Joint working

As their parents, our children learn from us about the ‘real world’ – having a job, finding somewhere to live, managing money. But the housing market has changed so much in the last few decades that what was once common practice is often no longer an option. Are your foster and residential carers and personal advisers up to date about housing for young people today? There will be issues particular to your local area but here is some general information about the housing market:

- social housing waiting lists can be very long
- from age 22, care leavers living in private rented accommodation will find that if they are still claiming housing benefit, it will reduce to the level of the shared accommodation rate¹³
- private rented properties can vary hugely in quality.

Some local authorities in Wales have co-located youth homelessness services together with their care leaver provision which ensures good access to specialist advice on housing options for young people leaving care. For example:

Torfaen Young People’s Support Service (TYPSS) is a ‘hub’ or one-stop shop for young people. Led by Torfaen County Borough Council, a range of departments and agencies fund posts and provide services. Instead of designing ‘standalone’ services within various funding and professional silos, young people and positive outcomes have been at the heart of service planning. Integrated service delivery follows logically when planning is based around young people’s needs.

¹³ Valuation Office Agency (2015) *Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates applicable from April 2015 – March 2016*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-housing-allowance-lha-rates-applicable-from-april-2015-march-2016>, accessed 19 September 2016

TYPSS has been evolving over several years, it includes the 16+ leaving care service, and offers all young people careers advice, sexual health and contraception sessions, welfare rights advice, family mediation and housing advice. For the last four years there has been a dedicated young person housing officer embedded within the service.

The decision to commit a housing officer to TYPSS was due to a change in case law – the 2009 Southwark Judgment – but also to local evidence on numbers and need, identified through independent research commissioned by the Supporting People commissioners within the local authority. This research pointed to a need for a more coordinated approach in dealing with young people at risk of homelessness.

The impact of the specialist housing officer is that young people have a more consistent response, and the one-stop approach makes it easier for them to engage with the officer and then access other services. Outcomes of the investment are provided to Supporting People on a quarterly basis. It is viewed as having a positive effect on both prevention and resettlement.

Swansea Local Authority has co-located its youth homelessness service with its care leaver services for the past decade. Personal advisers and young people can have access to specialist housing advice and support, as well as being well positioned to plan ahead if there is a risk of accommodation breakdown.

If there is no specialist housing provision for young people leaving care, a local housing options service (sometimes called a homelessness service) is usually keen to help other professionals to understand the local and national issues relating to housing choices. You could also ask a housing options officer to speak at regular foster or residential carer training sessions.

Leaving care – checklist

Whatever their current situation, all young people will need to be prepared for what life will be like when they leave care. Have you considered how best to prepare young people across the wide range of placements below?

- ☐ In local authority foster care
- ☐ In agency foster care (which could be out of authority)
- ☐ In local authority residential care
- ☐ In agency residential care (which could be out of authority)
- ☐ Those planning a When I am Ready arrangement
- ☐ In 'other arrangements' such as supported lodgings or supported accommodation projects

Young people all have their own unique circumstances – and one size does not fit all. Discussions will vary according to each individual young person, because you will be working with care leavers who, as well as having their own circumstances and future aspirations, could be:

- ☐ In long-term, settled care placements
- ☐ In a series of short-term placements
- ☐ Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children
- ☐ Planning to go to university, join the armed forces, or take up training or further education away from the local area
- ☐ In custody
- ☐ Physically disabled or with learning difficulties
- ☐ Teenagers who are newly looked-after
- ☐ Young parents
- ☐ Experiencing mental health difficulties (e.g. sectioned)
- ☐ In hospital for a long-term period of medical care

In considering these questions, it may be useful to do an audit of your team's skills and knowledge in providing up-to-date and accurate information to young people about their housing options, and to discuss with independent reviewing officers the range of options available and the sorts of issues they might want to consider covering in pathway plan reviews.

Joint working – checklist

Different parts of the local authority will have different information and experience when it comes to the needs of care leavers locally. Bringing this together and having a joint approach helps to manage the transition to leaving care better, in terms of accommodation and support. Use this checklist to see how well you are working together at this stage of the framework.

- ☐ Commissioning for leaving care support and housing is based on an evidenced needs analysis.
- ☐ All relevant parts of the local authority, other public sector agencies, voluntary agencies, housing associations and other local providers of relevant services feed into the needs analysis. As well as leaving care services, this could include housing options services, public health, youth offending services, probation/Wales Community Rehabilitation Company, and local providers.
- ☐ Leaving care commissioners understand and are consulted about changes to the local housing allocations scheme.
- ☐ Leaving care commissioners understand the supply, affordability and accessibility of housing locally – including social housing and the private rented sector (PRS).
- ☐ Housing and Supporting People commissioners understand the range of care leavers' needs, any projected changes in those needs, and also any changes in the size of the leaving care population.
- ☐ Access and referral policies for supported accommodation and floating support acknowledge the needs of care leavers.
- ☐ Codes of practice and guidance under the new Welsh housing and social services legislation¹⁴ support the above and also emphasise the need for planning and joint working to prevent homelessness.

¹⁴ Welsh Government (2014) *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014: Part 6 Code of Practice (Looked After and Accommodated Children)*. Available at: <http://gov.wales/docs/phhs/publications/160106pt6en.pdf>, accessed 19 September 2016

Top tips

- Think about how you can harness the experience of other young people to advise and guide care leavers. Often young people learn best from each other, particularly when they are being warned about challenges ahead. Peer training or mentoring, or even a short film made by young people to show others can be very effective.
- Close working between housing options, looked after children (LAC) and leaving care teams can help develop staff knowledge and their ability to offer good, realistic advice to care leavers. Having a member of staff from a housing authority or provider located within a leaving care service has proved to be highly effective in a number of authorities.
- Foster and residential carers, social workers and independent reviewing officers (IROs) need realistic information about what housing options are available locally so that they can pass this information on to young people.
- A good understanding of the data around looked after children and leaving care at a strategic level can improve long-term planning
- Ensure young people have access to accredited training courses on pre-tenancy awareness or life skills. This will allow them to gain additional qualifications or credits towards study courses. Care leavers also need to know where they can go for more tenancy advice after they no longer receive a leaving care service (at age 21 or at 25 for those in education and training), so they may need signposting to mainstream housing options and advice services.
- When planning with young people for their individual accommodation options, try to give them choice, but be realistic about what is possible and available in the local area.
- When preparing young people for the realities of their housing options work closely alongside foster carers and residential workers. They are likely to know young people very well, dependent on how long the placement has been, and are often the best person to talk to care leavers about the future – but they need up-to-date information to be able to do so.

2. Plan young people's accommodation and support with them

Supporters	Framework stages and options				Activity and approach
<div>Carer/residential worker</div> <div>Personal adviser</div> <div>Housing worker</div>	2. Plan young people's accommodation and support options with them				Involve young people in decision making and offer housing and support choice
	Training flats	Visit housing types	Family Group Conferencing for returns home and leaving custody	When I'm Ready	

'Once you've moved on and gone into shared accommodation you can end up living with people you don't get on with and it's really hard to move out because there isn't much out there.'

(Young person, Barnardo's Cymru)

'I've done the training flat, for me it didn't really work because I still had all the support for the whole time I was there.'

(Young person, Voices from Care)

Better planning and preparation will support better outcomes for young people, as well as giving them personal assurance about their next steps into adult life. Personal advisers and carers can help young people to understand or even try out different housing options for a short period of time. With a better understanding of the reality of living more independently, young people are empowered to make a well-informed choice.

Pathway plans set out when a young person will formally leave care, and the intended next steps. Part 6 of The Social Service and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 defines six categories of young people in respect of leaving care. Categories one to three encompass looked after children aged 16 and 17, care leavers under 18, care leavers aged over 18, and those reconnecting with care for education or training purposes. There is a legal requirement for these young people to have a pathway plan,¹⁶ which is a live document that is reviewed regularly.¹⁷ Each time the local authority accommodates the young person, a review of the pathway plan must be carried out within the first 28 days of the new placement.¹⁸ Social workers and personal advisers will have the information to be able to plan those moves well in advance.

Under The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 young people should also have a personal housing plan, though this is not a statutory requirement. The personal housing plan could be aligned with, or possibly subsumed within, the pathway plan.

¹⁶ Welsh Government (2014) *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014: Part 6 Code of Practice (Looked After and Accommodated Children)*. Available at: <http://gov.wales/docs/phhs/publications/160106pt6en.pdf>, accessed 19 September 2016

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Welsh Government (2015) *The Care Leavers (Wales) Regulations 2015*, p12. Available at: <http://gov.wales/docs/phhs/publications/160106pt6en.pdf>, accessed 19 September 2016

As stated in statutory guidance,¹⁹ contingency plans – or a ‘back-up’ plan – are a good idea for young people generally. For some young people, a more detailed contingency plan is needed – for example young people placed in a foster care or residential care setting in another area, those coming out of custody as a care leaver, or those seeking asylum and awaiting the decision. Some young people placed outside the local authority area may choose to stay where they were living as a looked after child and not return to their ‘home’ authority. Either way the code of guidance states clearly that care leavers can return to their local area to live, if they so choose, or stay in the area in which they have been accommodated.

18.9: In the case of young people in the looked after system who have been placed out of area, where they are leaving care and wish to return to the area to which they were originally connected they should be accepted as having a connection with the area, even where they have been placed for a considerable time elsewhere. In assessing whether an applicant’s household has a local connection with their area, an Authority should also consider whether any person who might reasonably be expected to live with the applicant has such a connection. Care leavers who wish to remain in the area of placement should also be considered to have a local connection should they meet the local connection test.²⁰

It is really important for these groups that there is detailed planning around their accommodation needs, and that practitioners develop a thorough understanding of requirements under the new legislation, which will inevitably take time to become fully implemented. In the interim, personal advisers and housing support workers will need to advocate for young people’s rights under the new legislation.

Some local authorities find that having a regular ‘panel’ meeting between housing and children’s services departments can effectively generate a shared agreement about the accommodation plan for some or all of the looked after young people who are preparing to leave care. This is where the personal housing plan could be formulated, if one is required, and it would be an additional planning meeting to the individual pathway planning meetings. Panel meetings can also be used to consider the range of available accommodation options, to avoid a care leaver being set up to fail in a tenancy which they are not yet ready for – whether a personal housing plan is required or not. Young people can be involved in any discussion, including panel meetings, if they want to be.

The new right to When I am Ready arrangements for young people in foster care allows young people more time to think about where they want to live when they do leave care. The guidance²¹ sets out how to plan for When I am Ready well

19 Welsh Government (2014) *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014: Part 6 Code of Practice (Looked After and Accommodated Children)*. Available at: <http://gov.wales/docs/phhs/publications/160106pt6en.pdf>, accessed 19 September 2016

20 Welsh Government (2016) *Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on the Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness*, p282. Available at: <http://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/160324-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities-on-allocation-of-accommodation-and-homelessness-en.pdf>, accessed 19 September 2016

21 Welsh Government (2016) *When I am Ready: Good Practice Guide*. Available at: <http://gov.wales/topics/health/publications/socialcare/guidance1/ready/?lang=en>, accessed 19 September 2016

before a care leaver reaches 18. When I am Ready can bring greater stability for care leavers, particularly those who don't yet feel ready to 'move out' or who have a very good relationship with their carer. The carer, who will probably know the young person best of all, should be involved in helping them plan for their next step. However, having a When I am Ready arrangement can lead to a change in relationships with a former foster carer, so it is important to have a contingency plan in place in case it doesn't work out. Whatever the plans, the detail needs to be written into their pathway plan.

Some care leavers may plan to return to their birth parents. Young people can have unrealistic expectations of what returning 'home' will be like, and often these relationships soon start to struggle. Where a return home is the plan, there needs to be substantial pre-move planning and on-going support to help both the young person and their parents or extended family to adjust. This can be a particular issue for care leavers returning home having been in custody. It's also important to have contingency plans in place which can be mobilised in the event of a breakdown.

Family Group Conferencing (FGC) can be a useful way to help the young person and their family make the best choices and to settle. FGC is a process led by family members to plan and make decisions for a child or young person, with their involvement. It is a voluntary process and, with an independent facilitator, young people and family members can work through options that might not have been initially obvious, including the need for on-going support

Focus on...

Young people leaving custody are particularly at risk of living in unsuitable accommodation or becoming homeless, and have often experienced poor accommodation or placements before their experience in custody. They may have additional challenges in accessing housing and the support to meet their needs, perhaps due to disruptive behaviour. Many supported accommodation projects do not accept young people if they have committed particular offences such as sexual offences or arson.

Planning for young people on short custodial sentences can be challenging, and young people often don't know where they are going to live until the last minute before they leave custody. Specific guidance, however, is laid out in respect of Category 2 young people (broadly defined as care leavers under 18 years old) in order to ensure that they have planned accommodation ready on their release, and that, where they are serving short sentences consideration should be given to holding their accommodation until their release.²²

²² Welsh Government (2014) Part 6 Code of Practice (Looked After and Accommodated Children) available at: <http://www.ccwales.org.uk/> accessed June 2016

The national pathway for children and young people (and separately for adults) in the secure estate should be viewed alongside the pathways developed for offenders to have access to social care in line with their entitlements under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. These pathways provide guidance on how to ensure an integrated approach to preparing for the accommodation needs of children and young people when they leave the secure estate.²³ The pathways allocate responsibility for tasks to specific services, and advise joint working between agencies and individuals at key points in the pathway. Agencies that should be involved include, the youth offending team or probation service, the Youth Justice Board, the secure estate, the local authority, the local health board, social landlords and Wales Community Rehabilitation Company.

The guidance describes processes pre-custody, support in custody, the seven days prior to release, and the day of release and beyond, all of which should be carried out to ensure there is suitable accommodation available for the young person when they are released.

These include:

- A pre-sentence report will need to be completed, which includes an assessment of the young person's living arrangements, health, education and involvement with social care. Within the first 10 days of entering custody, a joint planning meeting between the secure estate and the youth offending team should produce a sentence plan which includes details of accommodation on release. Leaving care personal advisers or social workers will need to:
 - Keep the young person informed about progress and their options.
 - Keep in touch with the young person throughout the time they are in custody, even if they are placed a long way from home
 - Keep the young person informed of the stages of the process.
- Where a housing issue has been identified, but has not been resolved by the 66th day prior to the young person being released, the youth offending team should submit a housing needs form to the local authority, and an assessment process should commence which identifies the young person's care and support needs under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 – which may include accommodation. Once they are identified as eligible for support under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 then options

²³ Welsh Government, 2015 National Pathway for Homelessness Services to Children, Young People and Adults in the Secure Estate. Available at <http://gov.wales/topics/housing-and-regeneration/services-and-support/homelessness/national-pathway/?lang=en>, accessed 19 September 2016

for suitable accommodation should be made available and a package of support agreed with the young person.

- The arrangements should be reviewed again seven days prior to leaving custody. A contingency plan will need to be in place in case the first option does not work
- Commissioners of leaving care and housing services need to take into account how easily young people leaving custody will be able to access existing services, and what additional services or support may need to be put in place specifically for them. This might involve a joint protocol between housing, children's services and youth offending teams so that suitable accommodation is provided locally. It may also require agencies that are offering post custody placements to travel to meet the young person in custody, or to arrange pre-tenancy interviews via Skype (as happens in HMP & YOI Parc).

Example

Llamau is a third sector agency working with young people and women at risk of homelessness across several local authorities in Wales. In 2013 it was awarded a contract by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) and the Welsh Government to employ two 'resettlement brokers', one for the south and one for the north of Wales.

The learning from this work is valuable in its own right for improving services to this highly vulnerable group of young people, who are characterised in part by being at a high risk of homelessness. Many of these young people are also looked after children or care leavers. But the model Llamau has developed with its partners – of bringing agencies together to solve problems and plan pro-actively – can also be applied across other groups of vulnerable young people where homelessness is a key concern.

The two resettlement brokers have brought together multi-agency panels in different areas to support the youth justice services/youth offending services locally and the secure estate in order to move forward with the YJB's plans on reintegration and resettlement in Wales.

Often deemed as too high-risk for supported accommodation options, in some local authorities this group is at a higher risk of being placed into bed and breakfast accommodation than any other group of young people, especially at the point of release from custody. The purpose of the panels assembled by the resettlement brokers is to engage relevant local agencies - both statutory and third sector – in the focused planning, problem solving and delivery of resettlement and reintegration support and services.

Through resources and co-operation from partners, the aim is to plug gaps and bring down the barriers to effective reintegration and resettlement not just for young people leaving custody, but also for those at risk of custody, at risk of reoffending or with an unmet need.

The focus on reintegration aims to stop offending through enabling young people to access the services and opportunities they need. The resettlement is not just about housing - it is broadly classified into seven linked areas, all of which are pertinent to the 'positive pathway' model locally:

- accommodation
- education, training and employment
- health, including mental health
- substance misuse
- families
- finance, benefits and debt
- transitions and case management

The funding for this work has now ceased, although the project is currently continuing and further funding is being sought. A report covering both the South and the North Wales project areas summarises all the project learning, outcomes and achievements, alongside further recommendations for continuing development.²⁴

Making well-planned moves is in the best interests of young people leaving care. Crisis or emergency moves are much less likely to support good outcomes, and may set young people back in other areas of their lives such as education, training or employment. There are different ways in which personal advisers or foster or residential carers can help care leavers make an informed choice about their move from care. Here are some examples:

Training flats

Many care leavers say they want to leave care so that they can get their 'own place'. The reality of living alone as the first step after leaving care can, however, be very different from what young people expect. Care leavers often describe feeling lonely, unsure how to manage household problems, or worried about finances and bills. Some local authorities are using training flats to help care leavers experience what it is really like to live on their own, without the risk of losing their own first tenancy.

²⁴ Hampson, K; Kinsey, T (2016) *Resettlement Broker Project – final report*. Llamau. Available at: www.llamau.org.uk/creo_files/default/final_report_on_the_resettlement_broker_project.pdf, accessed 19 September 2016

Visiting different housing types

It can be hard for care leavers to know where they want to live if they don't have any experience of different housing types. Language is very powerful: for example, the term 'hostel' often has negative connotations, suggesting night shelters or large buildings in poor condition with little support. However, a locally commissioned supported accommodation scheme – which may locally be called a 'hostel' – could in reality be a small, high-quality service, and a good first move for a young person. Another example is 'supported lodgings', which is likely to be an unfamiliar term, but in fact has many similarities with foster care, while being more suitable for older young people. Advice from other young people can be really helpful about the pros and cons of the various options available to them.

Some local authorities are offering care leavers the chance to visit or even stay in different options for a night or two, to get first-hand experience before they make their decision about where they want to live next. Giving young people the tools to make an informed decision can make a substantial difference to their commitment to their housing choice.

Leaving care – checklist

Are you working with young people in all these different settings to plan their accommodation and support? Young people might be:

- ☐ In 'other arrangements'
- ☐ In residential care
- ☐ Outside of your local authority area in foster or residential care settings
- ☐ At residential special schools
- ☐ In custody or secure units
- ☐ Living with parents or family

Top tips

- Having a housing officer in the leaving care team can make a big difference. They can provide support with up-skilling personal advisers in housing knowledge, as well as giving young people specialist housing advice and helping them to access various housing options. Many housing departments have placed housing officers in leaving care teams as part of their contribution as a 'corporate parent', or have made a 'virtual' arrangement.
- Consider setting up a panel to look at all the cases of young people leaving care. This is also an effective way to promote joint working. Panels usually include staff from leaving care and housing options teams, but could also usefully join up with voluntary sector providers of accommodation and support in the local area.
- Provide short-term beds for young people leaving custody. If a longer-term housing and support option is not yet ready for them, they can stay in a supported environment for few days prior to the move.
- Involve foster and residential carers and other trusted adults to help young people think about their options and make an informed choice about where they want to live.
- Wherever possible, give care leavers the opportunity to try out different types of accommodation before they make their choices, such as supported housing, supported lodgings, a shared flat or their own tenancy etc.

3. Reduce housing crisis

Supporters	Framework stages and options				Activity and approach
<div>Carer/residential worker</div> <div>Personal adviser</div> <div>Housing worker</div>	3. Reduce housing crisis <div>Respite/short breaks</div> <div>Staged exits from care</div> <div>Short-term placements from custody</div> <div>Family mediation</div>				Plan early and have contingency plans in place to prevent crises from escalating

‘I couldn’t sustain my flat on low pay, I had to move in with my girlfriend’s family or I would have been on the streets.’
(Young person, Voices from Care)

‘My landlord lived there [in shared accommodation] as well, I wasn’t very good with money and started owing rent. Eventually I had to leave but still owed him money, he chucked all my stuff out, but kept some of it, like my dad’s guitar’
(Young person, Barnardo’s Cymru)

The experience of homelessness at a young age is not only stigmatising but can, without effective support and accommodation options, result in long-term poor outcomes.²⁵ Many young people report their experience of homelessness as traumatic, leading to dropping out of education, training or employment and resulting benefit dependency. Becoming homeless can result in significantly higher risks of developing mental health problems, getting involved in substance misuse, risks of sexual exploitation, involvement in crime and, in some areas, involvement in gangs. This can result in young people disengaging from services which could make them increasingly difficult to support appropriately.²⁶

For care leavers, homelessness can feel even more of a damaging experience as they often don’t have family members able to help them, and despite the local authority being their ‘corporate parent’, many young people say they feel on their own. In some areas, without young people’s emergency or short stay accommodation, homeless care leavers describe staying in all-age hostels with older homeless people – who may be using substances or involved in crime – or living for long periods in inappropriate bed and breakfast or hotel accommodation. Bed and breakfast accommodation must be avoided and only used as a last resort. In Wales statutory guidance has recently been strengthened to require local authorities to make ‘exhaustive efforts’ to avoid the use of bed and breakfast²⁷ accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds.

²⁵ Foundation. Available at: <http://lankellychase.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Hard-Edges-Mapping-SMD-2015.pdf>, accessed 19 September 2016

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Welsh Government (2016) Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on the Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness, pp299-300. Available at: <http://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/160324-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities-on-allocation-of-accommodation-and-homelessness-en.pdf>, accessed 19 September 2016

When a care leaver is facing a potential breakdown in their living situation, it is important that action is taken quickly to prevent them becoming homeless. Homelessness can happen in any form of accommodation. For example, they may have returned home to family, or be in a When I am Ready arrangement, living with a partner, in a supported lodgings placement, or a supported accommodation scheme. Some young people may be in their own tenancy, but be building up rent arrears or be involved in anti-social behaviour locally, which is putting their tenancy at risk.

Example

In Swansea, the local authority has recently taken a decision to address pro-actively the use of bed and breakfast accommodation. In order to do this, a lead officer led a multi-agency steering group with representatives from social services, Supporting People, housing, the Youth Offending Service, Barnardo's Cymru, Wallich, Swansea Young Single Homeless Project and Gwalia. Together they have devised a more bespoke approach to meeting the support needs of young people at risk of going into bed and breakfast, and to planning alternative provision. This is having a significant impact on use of bed and breakfast in terms of stopping young people being placed there, but is also changing the way in which bed and breakfast is viewed locally – it is no longer seen as a viable option. The scheme started in November 2015 and at the time of writing this document (June 2016) there has been one instance of bed and breakfast being used for a young person aged over 18, and none for under-18s.

The roles of the personal adviser and – if the young person is living in supported accommodation – their key worker are both critical here, as they will know how each young person is managing, and should be visiting their accommodation regularly. Foster carers, independent visitors or other trusted adults in the young person's life should also take some responsibility in raising any concerns about how well a young person is managing, or if their housing is looking at risk.

A range of homelessness prevention tools can be used to try and prevent the young person from losing their housing. They may need to move on from their accommodation in due course, but prevention can be used to slow down a crisis, alleviate risks and enable a move to be made in a planned and sustainable way. A major trigger for homelessness for all young people, including those in care and leaving care, is the breakdown of relationships. Losing contact with long-term foster carers or leaving residential care abruptly as a result of an incident is damaging for young people. Unresolved conflict and the emotional impact of fractured relationships can reinforce low self-esteem and an inner belief that no-one cares. For 16 and 17-year-olds who are still looked after and living with foster carers or in residential care, a breakdown in relationships can sometimes result in an unplanned placement move into 'other arrangements'.

With appropriate prevention activity – such as a skilled offer of mediation – these unplanned placement moves may be avoided.

For a care leaver who is 18 or over, the breakdown of a relationship could be with a partner or friend they are living with, with their parents or wider family, or with their former foster carer or supported lodgings host. Young people who have returned to family or carers from custody may be at particular risk. Examples of homelessness prevention tools include:

Meditation

While mediation services are usually targeted at young people who live with their parents, they can also be used for young people at risk of placement breakdown. Sometimes a different person, perhaps from a different agency, is viewed as more independent because they are removed from the dynamics of the placement. Mediation can be structured and delivered in planned sessions, or be more immediate and informal.

Mediators usually help young people and their carers or families understand what the underlying tensions are about and what they want to achieve, and support them in finding ways to resolve issues. There are several ways of measuring what a successful outcome from mediation might be, one of which may be moving from their current housing situation, but in a planned way.

At a point of real crisis, there is not much time to arrange more formal mediation, nor is it likely to be an easy offer for young people and their carers to accept. But immediate mediation – someone with mediation and negotiation skills who can visit within a few hours – does not require a long ‘lead in’ period, and deals with issues in the here and now.

Example

Llamau delivers a mediation service across 10 local authorities that are embedded or aligned with statutory youth homelessness prevention services. A good example being the Vale of Glamorgan, where a ‘one-stop shop’ approach brings Llamau’s mediation service together with children’s services, housing and Llamau’s Jigso service – a housing and welfare rights advice and supported lodgings service. The mediation services work with families and also with young people in care, wherever placement breakdown is a risk.

The model of mediation used is proactive, offering where necessary an immediate response to carers/families, using home visiting – an essential prevention tool in its own right – and more informal negotiation as well as mediation skills. Nationally many young people say that if they had known the realities of leaving home or care early they might have worked harder to get along with their carers/parents. While always mindful of safeguarding,

Llamau provides some pragmatic reality checking in terms of the likely types of accommodation on offer to young people, along with location and affordability challenges. But even when young people cannot stay at home or in care placements, mediation workers try to support more planned moves and importantly to promote on-going positive contact with carers/parents where it's safe to do so. Young people report that this is a major benefit of mediation, even when they can't stay within the carer or family home.

Where funding and contracts permit, mediation workers will work with younger teenagers, aged 14 to 15. This is reported to be highly effective in stopping crisis homelessness presentations at an older age.

In Caerphilly, the latest quarter of mediation statistics showed a 93 per cent success rate of young people remaining in the family home – the highest level of success known by the author of this framework for youth homelessness mediation in England and Wales. Overall the combined success rate is over 80 per cent, with success measured by young people remaining in the family home for six months after the mediation support. This is the highest known level of mediation success by any agency across both Wales and England. Their model of delivery is highly effective due to its 'can do' approach, the alignment or integration with statutory services, and the skills and commitment of the staff. It is recognised nationally as an example of best practice.

Contact details²⁸

Family group conferencing

Family group conferencing (FGC) is another option that local authorities might consider. It is used with care leavers and their carers in some areas, and can achieve a successful outcome. The benefit of using FGC is that it has the potential to draw on the sometimes considerable resources within the extended family and friends network, enabling a comprehensive longer-term plan to be put in place as a preventative measure.

Example

Barnardo's Cymru is commissioned to deliver a family group conferencing (FGC) service in Neath Port Talbot as part of the 'Think Family' partnership.

The FGC service brings together family and close friends to attend family meetings where the care needs of an individual child or young person are addressed. The outcome aimed for is to produce a safe and realistic family plan which identifies how extended family and friends can help address the

²⁸ Contact: Joe Payne, Head of Cardiff & Vale Services and Family Mediation: joepayne@llamau.org.uk

needs of the individual (including accommodation). The plan is reviewed periodically. The service also provides court reports and advocacy for parents, children and young people.

The service receives high levels of referrals for 15 and 16-year-olds, and has also worked with 17-year-olds. The service has also worked with vulnerable young parents where the subject of the FGC is their baby or child.

Accommodation will often be an important part of the issues raised for young people presenting in adolescence, and there is no reason why an FGC model couldn't be used with older young people.

Contact details²⁹

Top tips

- If there is no option to use a family group conferencing service or mediation service, do staff in your service have the skills and confidence to mediate and negotiate? If not, there are agencies that offer accredited training on mediation.
- Some housing options services have invested in this training. You could consider commissioning training between several different organisations, as these are generic skills that staff in a number of different agencies could make use of.
- In 2011 Depaul UK published a useful outline of the benefits of mediation with young people, based on their experience of providing family mediation across several projects in England. This includes a business case for investment based on a detailed cost-benefit analysis and savings to the public purse.³⁰

Respite/short breaks

If relationships are under strain, sometimes young people just need 'time out' to think about what is going on and to make a plan for the future. Offering a respite or short break service can help care leavers take their time over decisions and think about their next move. A respite service might just be a safe place for a care leaver to go for a few days or weeks, or it might offer a range of coaching or therapeutic support. Short breaks might be used in conjunction with mediation, to take the young person out of the crisis situation while working together to try and resolve the underlying issues. Under no circumstances should bed and breakfast accommodation be considered 'short break' accommodation.

²⁹ Johanne Jones on 01639 620771 or 07595461370. johanne.jones@barnardos.org.uk

³⁰ Insley, E (2011) *Homelessness prevention: can we afford not to?: reconnecting families to prevent youth homelessness*. Depaul UK, London

Short-term moves from custody

Young people leaving custody are at particular risk of homelessness. The national pathway for children and young people in the secure estate (and separately for adults) should be viewed alongside the pathways developed for offenders to have access to social care, in line with their entitlements under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and The Housing (Wales) Act 2014, to ensure an integrated approach to preparing for the accommodation needs of young people when they leave the secure estate. The pathways involve allocating responsibility and direct joint working between key agencies and individuals, including the youth offending team or probation service, the Youth Justice Board, the secure estate, the local authority, the local health board, social landlords and Wales Community Rehabilitation Company.

Some local authorities are providing short-term accommodation that young people can access direct from custody as part of their resettlement plan. This might be a ring-fenced room in a supported housing project or a specialist supported lodging. The service can be used for a few weeks while they look at longer-term options available locally or rebuild relationships with family prior to moving back home, or until their chosen placement becomes available.

Joint working – checklist

To avoid housing crisis and prevent homelessness, what works well is for the leaving care service and local housing options services (sometimes called homelessness prevention unit or service) to work closely together. In some local authorities, there is a member of the housing options service based within or linked to the leaving care service.

A local authority could, as part of its corporate parenting responsibility, have an agreed set of prevention tools available and a shared understanding across housing and children's services regarding who would do what in a situation of housing crisis for a young person aged 16 or over who is looked after or a care leaver. This can be outlined in the joint protocol regarding care leavers and accommodation.

How well are departments working together in your local authority?

Use the checklist below to assess how well your departments are working together:

- ☐ Homelessness prevention services are accessible to care leavers and take account of the range of housing situations they may be in.

31 Welsh Government (2015) National Pathway for Homelessness Services to Children, Young People and Adults in the Secure Estate. Available at: <http://gov.wales/topics/housing-and-regeneration/services-and-support/homelessness/national-pathway/?lang=en>, accessed 19 September 2016

- ☐ Leaving care teams are aware of the homelessness prevention support available locally.
- ☐ Housing and homelessness officers are familiar with the needs of care leavers in their area and can offer accurate and tailored advice.
- ☐ Youth offending teams are involved in commissioning short-term accommodation options that are suitable for young people immediately on release from custody.
- ☐ A joint protocol is in place which outlines how you will all work together to avoid homelessness and housing crisis among care leavers.

Top tips

- Contingency plans are really helpful as they can help reduce crisis points.
- Having a designated information point for early advice and support as laid out in legislation, can help avoid crisis. ^{32, 33}
- Some young offender institutions are allowing young people preparing to leave custody to use Skype to take part in assessment interviews with housing providers.
- Care leavers in university or further education colleges will require arrangements to be made for vacation accommodation.

³² *The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014*

³³ *The Housing (Wales) Act 2014*



4. Access housing and support as needed

Supporters	Framework stages and options				Activity and approach
<div> <div>Carer/residential worker</div> <div>Personal adviser</div> <div>Housing worker</div> </div>	4. Access housing and support as needed				Commission a range of housing and support options with access for care leavers
	Short stay/ Emergency Shared houses Nightstop Short breaks Short-term supported lodgings Emergency assessment bed	High support Small units 24/7 Small group houses Specialist supported lodgings Housing first	Medium support Floating support Specific accommodation leased by local authorities	Low support Shared houses with floating support Peer landlords On-call concierge	

‘Supported lodgings really helped me progress by building on some skills I already had, like with cooking and scary stuff like paying the bills.’
(Young person, Barnardo’s Cymru)

‘I went into my own flat when I should have gone into supported lodgings, but I refused. It was probably my own fault but I was stubborn. I think my social worker knew it wouldn’t work out, but I had to find out for myself. I’m in supported lodgings now and it’s better.’
(Young person, Voices from Care)

Care leavers will need access to different types of accommodation and support at different times in their journey out of care. This may depend on diverse factors such as the age at which they leave care, their emotional health or resilience, life skills and experience, mental and physical health, disability, any experience of substance use or offending, and a range of other factors.

Although this framework is presented as a structured model, there is no linear relationship between the types of accommodation and support that care leavers will need. Some care leavers will only need one type of accommodation and support, whereas others will have several moves before they progress to independence. They may move between different types of provision sequentially or more randomly, depending on how their needs change. For example, if a previously unidentified mental health need becomes apparent, a young person may jump quickly from a low support to a high support setting.

While it is helpful to have a guideline for how long a young person might stay in a supported accommodation option (e.g. supported lodgings, a foyer or a ‘step-down’ shared house with floating support), there does need to be some degree of flexibility built in to contracts to enable commissioners and providers to extend a young person’s stay if they are not ready to move on and run the risk of failure if they do move.

The personal adviser, and anyone who is supporting the young person day to day, will have a good idea of how a young person is getting on. By working together, staying in touch, and involving the young person directly in planning what the next move might be, a more positive outcome is likely. The accommodation decision – and contingency plan – should be agreed and written into a care leaver’s pathway plan.

It is helpful if personal advisers are familiar with the range of accommodation options available to care leavers locally, including how to refer young people into the various sorts of accommodation and support. This can be much simpler when there is a single integrated gateway to all supported accommodation options. This should also address the strategic planning of appropriate housing

Regulation 9(2) of the Care Leavers (Wales) Regulations 2015 defines suitable accommodation as accommodation:

- (a) which, so far as reasonably practicable is suitable for the category 2 young person in the light of their needs, including any health needs and any needs arising from any disability (1)
- (b) in respect of which the responsible local authority has satisfied itself as to the character and suitability of the landlord or other provider, and
- (c) in respect of which the responsible local authority has so far as reasonably practicable, taken into account the category 2 young person's –
 - (i) wishes and feelings
 - (ii) education, training and employment needs³⁴

Although they need access to a range of provision, in reality care leavers will make up a relatively small proportion of the young people who need wider housing support. It therefore makes sense that the housing options set out at this stage are jointly or co-commissioned by Supporting People commissioners and children's services. This might mean drawing up specifications together, agreeing to pool some budgets, allocating specific beds in a scheme to care leavers, or having a shared protocol that sets out agreed access routes.

Example

The Isle of Anglesey County Council has developed a menu of accommodation options for young people, including a scheme for those with complex or multiple needs. A seven-bed supported housing scheme is run by Digartref and is located in Llangefni.

The project accepts young people with higher levels of need that would, in the majority of cases, be considered too high for placement within other supported housing provision. Young people's needs include substance misuse and/or offending, mental health problems including self-harm, and extremely challenging behaviours. The service was commissioned in May 2013, and from the outset has involved a multi-agency allocation panel which meets to consider referrals and general sharing of information and good practice on a monthly basis or when a vacancy arises. Agencies represented on the group include

³⁴ Welsh Government (2015) *The Care Leavers (Wales) Regulations 2015*, pp13-14. Available at: <http://www.assembly.wales/Laid%20Documents/SUB-LD10402/SUB-LD10402-e.pdf>, accessed 19 September 2016

children services, housing services, mental health services, youth offending, Supporting People commissioners and probation, with Digartref as the service provider.

Demand for this service has been much higher than initially anticipated, and the referral process must be via one of the statutory agencies mentioned above. However, feedback from the above agencies has been extremely complimentary, and the level of outcomes measured against the Supporting People National Framework has been very positive. The void levels have been negligible, and given the level of challenging needs presented by some of the young people accessing the service, the results achieved within this project are testament to the commitment and dedication of the service provider and the willingness of all partner agencies to work together to ensure the best possible outcomes for these challenging but highly vulnerable young people.

In addition to the seven-bed scheme there is also a cluster of two properties which can be used as a move-on/‘step-down’ resource or for a young person who is either of lower risk, may be better suited to a non-shared environment, or may be pregnant.

Contact details³⁵

Example

Solas’s George Street scheme supports young people with complex and multiple needs.

Funded in part by Newport Supporting People commissioners and also through spot purchasing of beds by other local authorities, the George Street scheme has been developed specifically for young people who are transitioning from care to independence, but particularly for those with complex and multiple needs who are often a risk to themselves or others.

The scheme has eight self-contained flats, with a high level of staffing and a clear model or ‘theory of change,’ rooted in work with young people with complex trauma.³⁶

The scheme has been developed in recognition that for some young people, housing related support - even at a high level of support – will not meet the range of needs that they have. Staff are trained to work in a ‘psychologically informed’ environment with young people, and are supervised by an

³⁵Arwel Jones, Principal Development Officer, Housing Services, Isle of Anglesey County Council : RArwel.Jones@ynysmon.gov.uk

³⁶Solas (2016) *George Street: Housing related support for young people experiencing challenges and difficulties in their lives*. Available at: <http://www.solas-cymru.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/FINAL-GEORGE-BROCHURE-PDF1.pdf>, accessed 19 September 2016

attachment specialist. As well as group work there are one-to-one sessions for young people and/or their families/significant others if appropriate. The aim is to support and work with the young people to help them move on successfully and in a planned way, with the emphasis on training and/or employment

Contact details³⁷

Example

GISDA is a charity working with vulnerable and homeless 14 to 25-year-olds in North Wales. It provides a wide range of different services to young people – including young parents and care leavers – such as family mediation, preventative work in schools, confidence building programmes, mentoring for young parents, setting up social enterprises to further youth employment, and supported housing projects.

In recognition of the complex needs of many young people who are at risk of homelessness and living in supported accommodation in Gwynedd, GISDA has developed a model which is similar to PIE (psychologically informed environment) and TIC (trauma informed care). Within their model is an element which focusses on the importance of receiving intense support when moving towards employment.

Since adopting a therapeutic model, GISDA reports that it has:

- Meant they could take referrals for young people evicted from other provision
- Developed a range of responses that focus on restorative practice and mediation to avoid formal warnings and evictions
- Been able to move young people between their own services for ‘cooling off’ periods if needed
- Reduced risk of eviction due to arrears through making access to wi-fi contingent on payment of service charges
- Improved relationships between staff and young people
- Significantly reduced evictions from supported accommodation, despite taking more young people with complex and multiple needs. Only two young people have been evicted in the last two years.

A service framework and training toolkit for staff is being developed to

³⁷ Charlotte Waite, Director of Children, Young People and Families, Solas: Charlotte.Waite@solas-cymru.co.uk

formalise current practice. The toolkit will ensure that all young people have their own progression pathways that are ambitious, and will assist them (alongside GISDA's therapeutic support service) towards independent living. The progression plan will take into consideration external factors which can influence the ability to move forward towards independent living, such as the transition from relying on benefit to employment.

Contact details³⁸

Example

The SA1 scheme, run by the Swansea Young Single Homeless Project (SYSHP), provides temporary accommodation for 16 to 21-year-olds with low to medium support needs. The scheme comprises three self-contained furnished bedsits with a shared bathroom. It is a step-down scheme from SYSHP's hostel and Barnardo's supported lodgings scheme, giving young people experience of managing their own tenancy before moving on to permanent accommodation.

SYSHP provides weekly support which gives young people some help while they are living in their own or shared accommodation. However, a support worker is available 24 hours a day if there are issues or if tenants just need someone to talk to. The support provided is based on individual needs, but is focussed on assisting the young people to identify goals with moving on into independent living, and accessing education, training, or employment.

The aim is to support young people through their transition into mainstream housing and a sustainable lifestyle.

The availability of 24 hour support from SYSHP's hostel, Drws Agored, has proved to be invaluable in providing support when young people need it, enabling young people to maintain their accommodation. It has also provided some confidence to neighbours.

In addition, where a young person is struggling to maintain their tenancy they are able to move back to the hostel for more intensive support before moving on again.

Contact details ³⁹

³⁸ Sian Elen Tomos, sian@gisda.co.uk

³⁹ Liz Slade, L.Slade@syshp.org.uk

Joint working

Many local authorities that use an accommodation pathway have put in place a single integrated gateway to all supported accommodation in the local area. A gateway enables:

- a more consistent approach to needs assessment and understanding of provision, resulting in better matching of needs with services
- better information for young people regarding the choice of accommodation options available, including for care leavers
- better use of limited resources, ensuring those with the highest needs access the services they need
- improved safeguarding, with a shared knowledge of potential risk, agreed approaches to managing risk, and knowledge of who is placed where
- improved ability to continue with crisis prevention work, where relevant and appropriate
- improved ability to plan moves with care leavers themselves
- an overview of planned and unplanned move-on
- prompt and appropriate filling of voids

Ultimately, using a gateway approach - as opposed to young people self-referring - ensures that priority is given to those who most need supported accommodation.

There are a wide range of different housing and support types that may be appropriate for care leavers. These are arranged in the framework into emergency/short-stay, longer-stay and step-down provision.

Example

Nightstop⁴⁰ provides short - stay accommodation in family homes. There are three Nightstop schemes in Wales, covering four local authority areas (Powys, Isle of Anglesey and a joint scheme between Flintshire and Denbighshire). All three schemes are accredited by Depaul UK and provide emergency accommodation in trained hosts' own homes. These are a useful short-stay option in any local authority area, and are often used as an option in more rural areas, where supported accommodation schemes can be a long way from a young person's local area.

Nightstop is a very short-stay option. Immediate access provision – with stays for up to three nights – or a 'Nightstop Plus' scheme can provide accommodation for a little longer. Nightstop is not usually suitable for young

⁴⁰ Depaul UK. Nightstop UK official website. Available at: <https://uk.depaulcharity.org/NightstopUK>, accessed 19 September 2016

people with higher levels of needs, for example those with a substance misuse problem, a history of violence or significant offending and serious mental health problems.

The cross-authority scheme between Flintshire and Denbighshire came about through both local authorities agreeing to work more regionally to tackle the number of homeless young people being accommodated in bed and breakfast and hostel accommodation. Feedback received via consultation with stakeholders regarding the development of Nightstop was positive. The aim of the Nightstop service was agreed between the Supporting People teams in Flintshire and Denbighshire and Local Solutions in April 2013. It made good sense in terms of economies of scale and the nature of the scheme in reducing bed and breakfast use in more rural areas.

One learning from the scheme has been that while Nightstop gives immediate, same-day access, it is important to get risk assessments from the youth offending team and children's services in a timely manner, making sure there is buy-in from these services and ensuring that young people can be accommodated the same day.

For Flintshire and Denbighshire, the value for money benefits for this option are as follows:

- Payments to householders for 622 nights at a rate of £15 per night = a total of £9,330
- Average cost of bed and breakfast (Flintshire) is £38.50 per night (with foster placements for 16 and 17 year olds being more expensive), so 622 nights in bed and breakfast = £23,947
- Accommodation saving of £14,617, which does not take into consideration the additional support provided by householders and the positive outcomes.

Preventing the repeat cycle of homelessness often seen in this age group is the real saving.

Contact Details⁴¹

Emergency/short-stay provision

Short-term supported lodgings provide safe accommodation for young people in the family homes of approved local hosts. These are similar to Nightstop in many ways but not part of the accredited scheme. The option is likely to be part of a local supported lodgings scheme, where most hosts are recruited for longer stays, but a few are willing or want to provide shorter-stay options. Depending on the scheme, young people may be able to stay for a few nights or up to several weeks. With their own room and access to cooking and washing facilities, young people are given a supportive environment and opportunities to build up their life skills.

⁴¹ Debbie Cooke, Director, Young People & Families, Local Solutions. Debbie.cooke@localsolutions.org.uk

Ring-fenced beds are provided in some larger supported accommodation schemes. These may be quite basic single rooms, offering emergency access for young people at immediate risk of homelessness. Support workers may assess the young person while alternative accommodation is sought.

Assessment centres tend to be commissioned as part of a broader young people's accommodation pathway, usually in large urban areas. They provide a first stage point to the pathway, where young people can stay for a short period while they are assessed and their next accommodation decided. While planned, non-emergency moves for care leavers would not usually require the use of an assessment centre, for those in an emergency, this is a useful option.

Local housing authorities have to provide interim temporary accommodation (TA) for single people and families under Section 68 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, while a homelessness assessment is carried out, and if someone is deemed to be eligible, homeless, likely to be in 'priority need' or have no other place to stay. Care leavers are automatically 'priority need' up to the age of 21 so should be given access to temporary accommodation. This option will vary between local authorities in terms of the types of accommodation available. It may be a self-contained unit in a block of housing which is all designated as temporary accommodation, or it may be a form of house sharing, and may or may not include housing management or support. Either way, this is likely to be a difficult and scary experience for a young person. A provision of support for a young person in any form of temporary accommodation is essential.

Longer-stay provision

Supported accommodation is a generic term for accommodation where there is some sort of support provided on-site. There are many different models of supported accommodation, which are split here into **1 family-type support and 2 other types:**

1 Family-type supported accommodation

When I am Ready arrangements are a statutory right for care leavers in foster care in Wales. They allow a young person to stay with their former foster carer from 18 to 21 if they and the carer want the arrangement to continue. The foster placement is usually converted into a tenancy-type arrangement, and the young person will carry on living in the household in the same way. They will be given support from their former foster carer to help develop life skills.

Supported lodgings are placements within a family home in the local community. The host provides a room and cooking and washing facilities, as well as offering support and advice to the young person. Supported lodgings can be used as emergency placements, but are usually a longer-term option. They can help care leavers to improve their life skills, such as managing money, cooking, shopping, cleaning, etc., and give them a family-based setting. Some supported lodgings are specifically for care leavers with high support needs, such as young parents, those coming out of custody, or those at risk of sexual exploitation.

2 Other types of supported accommodation

Local authorities have some supported accommodation schemes, commissioned by Supporting People for 16 and 17 year olds who are looked after or care leavers. Schemes may be run by a charity, a registered provider (a social landlord) or a private provider.

Supported accommodation schemes can vary substantially in size. The accommodation can be bedrooms with shared facilities, bedsits or self-contained flats. Support may be available 24/7 on-site, in the daytime only or on-call support at night. Schemes can also include dispersed housing and may have step-down units attached to help young people prepare for a less intensively supported environment. Support workers (sometimes called 'key workers') work individually with young people on their own support plan towards agreed goals, such as around education, training, employment, life skills, independent living skills, improving emotional wellbeing, confidence and physical health.

Small group homes models tend to be commissioned for young people with physical or learning disabilities who will need ongoing support from adult social services. Group homes might be commissioned jointly by children's services, adult social care and housing related support commissioners. Housing benefit and elements of other benefits that the young person may be able to claim due to their disability should also be factored into the whole package. There are specialist providers who are able to provide young people with focused, small-group living arrangements. This could be an option for very small numbers of young people (maybe two or three) to live together, who have previously been living in specialist foster or residential care. A long lead-in time is needed in considering this option, in terms of the financial modelling, commissioning and matching of young people.

Housing First is a model traditionally is used for people with multiple and complex needs. It provides an independent tenancy, sometimes through a housing association or a private rental, at the same time as very intensive, bespoke wrap-around support. While it tends to be a model that is used for older, long-term homeless people, it is an option to consider for young people who are likely to struggle in larger schemes such as foyers or in supported lodgings. Having your own front door can be a positive option for some young people who have higher needs, as long as there is commissioning of support through dedicated, specialist floating support services, with some 24-hour call-out if needed.

It is important to remember that, whether they are living in private rented or social housing, if the young person is claiming housing benefit, then their exemption from the shared accommodation rate for being a care leaver will end on their 22nd birthday. The difference between the rent and the housing benefit payable will need to be bridged, or the young person would need to move to, more affordable, shared accommodation, which could be disruptive.

‘Step-down’ provision

Shared or self-contained provision with floating support gives young people some support while they are living in their own or shared accommodation. Floating support could be provided via housing related support or, if the young person is under 18, funded by children’s services, as an additional support on top of the personal adviser from children’s services. Floating support assists care leavers to settle into their accommodation and the local community, including accessing local services and dealing with bills and budgeting.

‘Step-down’ provision can be attached to more intensively supported accommodation schemes, and gives young people a next step towards independence while maintaining their link to the higher support scheme. Where this is the case, the young person may live in a shared house or their own small self-contained flat or bedsit near to the supported accommodation scheme, may have the same ‘key worker’ that they had previously, and still be part of the higher support scheme. Other ‘step-down’ provision can be commissioned separately, but with good day to day links with the local supported accommodation schemes.

Some young people leaving care will be ready for the more independent ‘step-down’ accommodation as their first move out of care, and do not need to go through the higher support accommodation first. Assessment and pathway planning are key to making decisions with young people about their readiness for such a move.

On-call or concierge schemes provide very light-touch housing management support as needed. Young people are interviewed before being invited to apply for a house-share, and sometimes are required to pass a pre-tenancy course before they can take up their place.

Example

‘Step-down’ shared housing – progression from larger supported accommodation schemes.

Vale of Glamorgan Council has leased properties from private landlords for young people to move in to as a ‘step-down’ from higher cost supported housing schemes. Young people share these properties, which enables them to move more readily into training and employment.

Contact details⁴²

The Clwyd Alyn Isallt scheme in Llandudno provides 12 units of supported accommodation and 13 units of floating support in ‘move on’ accommodation for young people. This model is one which potentially gives young people more progression into less supported provision before their own tenancy and is a

⁴² Ian Jones, Housing Solutions Manager, Vale of Glamorgan Council: ILJones@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

‘step-down’ from higher cost supported accommodation and can reduce the risk of ‘occupancy blocking’ in the accommodation.

Contact Details ⁴³

Sharing as a housing option for care leavers

Some care leavers will want or need to live in a shared house with other young people, perhaps with floating support attached. It is important for personal advisers to discuss sharing with care leavers who are not likely to have their own social tenancy as an option, as on their 22nd birthday, their housing benefit entitlement in the private sector will drop to the shared accommodation rate of local housing allowance. Given the demands on social housing, and the limited supply, the reality is that many will need to share at some point later in their lives. Shared social housing can also be an option, although it is not widespread.

Peer or ‘lead’ landlord schemes tend to be for young people with low support needs, who are nearly ready to manage a tenancy on their own. Housing providers can either rent a private house or use their own housing stock to run these schemes, and sub-let to young people. One young person is identified as the lead tenant, who takes on some agreed responsibility, which could include offering advice in an informal way, collecting rent from others in the shared house, while helping them budget and role-modelling good tenant behaviour.

Example

Hafod Care and Carmarthenshire have set up a shared house for young people. It is a pilot, which started in July 2015 and was created due to the lack of suitable affordable housing. Hafod Care, which runs a local private sector leasing scheme, remodelled one of its properties and children’s services, youth services, housing services, Supporting People and providers of 24 hour staffed services are involved in making it work. Two young people who both have some level of vulnerability are now successfully sustaining their tenancies. Uncertainty about funding means this model is standing still at the moment, but lessons learnt so far are that a tri-part approach is needed:

Landlord function (sourcing properties, allocations, tenancy management) funded through rent.

Matching and relationship management (house meetings once a week or fortnight, tapering off when relationships are established) funded through housing management charge attached to rent.

Housing related support provided to each individual according to need.

⁴³ Scott Robinson, Manager of Issalt, Scott.Robinson@clwydalyn.co.uk

This model allows for the separation of accommodation from support and for shared housing to become a long-term housing solution, rather than temporary accommodation, but the modelling of the accommodation needs to be at the shared accommodation rate for this, not the one-bed rate (unless young people under 25 are exempt from the shared accommodation rate) and with no other assumptions on additional subsidy unless this is agreed locally.

Contact details⁴⁴

Top tips

- Supported accommodation projects tend to be most effective when they are small and can offer more bespoke support to young people. Larger-scale schemes for young people with minimum to high needs, or schemes for a mix of ages, are usually not as effective in supporting care leavers. Accommodation options that are available to both care leavers and other young people are often good, as they allow young people to mix, and this can be another benefit of joint commissioning.
- When departments work closely together to agreed outcomes and shared budgets and management, then accommodation and support pathways for young people are more effective.
- When placing care leavers in accommodation or moving them on, it's important to think holistically about their needs and the potential implications of moves on other aspects of the pathway plan, such as education or employment.
- Commissioners should encourage providers to partner strategically with the local authority and recognise the added value brought through innovation, additional programmes and flexibility of working.
- Young people often talk about the quality of relationships with significant people in their lives, including housing related support workers and personal advisers. The balance of weighting between quality and cost in any tendering process is a matter for commissioners, but lower hourly salaries can equate to a higher staff turnover or fewer skilled or experienced staff.

⁴⁴ Erica Barrett, *Supporting People* ERBarrett@carmarthenshire.gov.uk





5. Access and successfully manage longer-term move-on and support options

Supporters	Framework stages and options				Activity and approach
<div>Carer/residential worker</div> <div>Personal adviser</div> <div>Housing worker</div>	5. Access and successfully manage longer-term move-on and support options				Develop a range of move-on options Work with landlords to reduce evictions Work with partners to develop a range of housing options
	Suitable shared and self-contained options	Mixture of tenancy types available	Affordability checks and preparation	Support as needed to set up and sustain tenancy	

‘If the place is really bad, they move you, but you have to have a really good reason why you can’t live there. The place I went into was really damp – also I work late and the area wasn’t safe for me to walk back at night, but the second flat felt really safe, it’s more central and I love it.’
 (Young person, Barnardo’s Cymru)

As corporate parents, our ambition for care leavers is that they are eventually able to live as independently as possible, develop positive social relationships and have successful, happy and healthy lives as adults, with the resilience to cope with the inevitable ups and downs. The final stage of the framework sets out the support needed to help care leavers move towards greater independence.

For some young people, this transition will happen earlier, while others may need specific support from a personal adviser or housing worker beyond 21 or even after 25.

A young person’s long-term housing ambitions should be discussed and documented in their pathway plan. This will need to be kept up to date as circumstances and wishes change, and should remain realistic given the local housing situation. Personal advisers will need to get advice from housing officers about the long-term housing options locally.

There are a number of factors which impact on the availability of housing for young people. The supply of accommodation that is affordable for people on low incomes varies, with significant local and regional differences in the housing market. But the amount of affordable accommodation available to young people under 25 in most areas is already limited, and this is projected to become more challenging in the future, in part due to reduced availability but also due to affordability. There is reported to be low landlord confidence in young people as tenants, in part due to general concerns on affordability and also due to the changes in Universal Credit, whereby rent is paid direct to the claimant unless a specific exemption is granted on the basis of vulnerability. While care leavers are a named group that are likely to be vulnerable and granted an exemption, this is not automatic and is done on a case-by-case basis.

Care leavers are currently exempt from the local housing allowance shared accommodation rate, which means that they are able to access self-contained

flats or other single-occupancy accommodation. Traditionally, care leavers have accessed social housing as a long-term option and have often been given high priority. However, forthcoming welfare changes mean that care leavers currently in tenancies will see this exemption end for all young people aged 22 and over in 2018, leaving them with the lower shared accommodation rate. Inevitably, unless they are able to make up the significant rent difference through earnings, or have a child or a partner to support them, they will have little option but to move into cheaper, shared accommodation. Currently this presents challenges as there is very little shared social housing in Wales.⁴⁵

Living in social housing

Social housing landlords might be called ‘registered providers’ and are regulated by Welsh Ministers under Part 1 of the Housing Act 1996: Regulatory Framework for Housing Associations Registered in Wales.⁴⁶ There are several recent changes and trends in social housing:

- Local housing allowance rates for both social and private rented accommodation are now uprated by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rather than with reference to local rents, thus severing the link between housing support and actual housing costs. In Wales, local authority rents are being brought back in line with housing association rents under new legislation. In addition, forthcoming cuts to housing benefit will reduce payments to social tenants if their rent is currently higher than the amount of housing benefit they would receive in the private rented sector.
- availability of social housing is already severely limited in many areas, in part due to limited investment in building new social housing. In terms of one-bed social housing, a combination of factors is limiting access:
 - a general shortage of one-bed properties. This is a national issue: many units of one-bed accommodation are in sheltered housing and are designated for older people, with those aged 55 years and over prioritised.
 - demand for this size of accommodation is increasing from tenants subject to the under-occupation penalty (‘bedroom tax’). Local authorities and registered providers need to reduce the risk of arrears and homelessness among existing tenants, and prioritise these households in allocation schemes, which further reduces access for most young people.

A tenancy in social housing could be in any of the following:

⁴⁵ Clarke, C; Heywood, A (2016) *Feasibility study of the prospect of developing a viable housing model for those entitled only to access the shared accommodation rate*. Cambridge Centre for Housing & Planning Research. Available at: http://chcymru.org.uk/uploads/events_attachments/FINAL_Report_on_viable_housing_models_for_under_35s_-_Final_2016.pdf, accessed 19 September 2016

⁴⁶ Welsh Government (2011) *Regulatory Framework for Housing Associations Registered in Wales*. Available at: <http://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/111202housingregframeworken.pdf>, accessed 19 September 2016

- housing that the local authority still owns and manages
- housing which is part of a 'large-scale voluntary transfer' (LSVT) – where what was once council-owned stock has been transferred to a housing association
- housing which is owned or managed by a housing association, which they have built, bought or leased.

Allocation schemes

Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 regulates the allocation of social housing in Wales. Anyone who meets the criteria must be accepted onto the waiting list and can only be excluded from it if, hypothetically, a court makes an outright possession order against them for unacceptable behaviour (including rent arrears) if they are already the local authority's secure tenant. Local authorities do, however, have discretion over downgrading an applicant's priority, and the policies can therefore include conditions such as the length of residence in the local area. Reasonable preference must still be given to those in housing need, including statutorily homeless households unless they have had their priority reduced due to previous behaviour. It is usual for care leavers to get some sort of additional priority (banding or points), but there is no statutory duty to give care leavers any priority over other groups, unless they are homeless, in which case they must be given a reasonable preference.

Living in the private rented sector

The 2011 change in calculation of the local housing allowance (which sets the level of housing benefit payable in any area) from the 50th to the 30th percentile, has restricted the pool of private rented accommodation that is affordable in any area to the lower end of the market. These changes have made all but the cheapest properties out of reach for young people.

Shared accommodation rate

The shared accommodation rate (SAR) limits the amount payable to most young people living in the private rented sector to the cost of a room in a shared house. From April 2012, the SAR was extended from the age of 25 up to 35, which means that more people are competing for accommodation in shared housing. This is reported by both Crisis and Homeless Link to be having a significant impact on the availability of private rented accommodation.

There are some exemptions to the SAR, including for care leavers up to age 22. There is also an exemption for those who have lived in resettlement accommodation for three months or more, but this only applies once they reach the age of 25. Care leavers could also be considered within this exemption group if they have lived in supported accommodation after leaving care. Some options for providing support to care leavers as they become ready for greater independence include:

- Landlord accreditation – identifying private sector landlords who are prepared to work with a personal adviser to support care leavers as they take on their own tenancies. This might include assisting with budgeting, having some flexibility in the tenancy agreement, working with the local authority and young person to avoid eviction, and having lower rent deposit requirements. Rent Smart Wales is responsible for the registration and training of landlords.
- Working with housing authorities to ensure care leavers are able to access the private rented sector – most local housing authorities will have a private rented sector (PRS) access scheme (sometimes called a social lettings agency) which is either run in-house or commissioned from a provider. Rather than establishing a separate ‘leaving care’ scheme, a housing authority could – in its corporate parenting role – ensure that care leavers are helped to access suitable, affordable and appropriate accommodation in the private rented sector via the general scheme. The scheme should offer landlords a range of incentives such as:
 - bond and rent deposit schemes
 - rent in advance
 - rent paid direct to the landlord (but only if agreed by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on a case-by-case basis)
 - a named contact person and a 24-hour helpline
 - floating support if needed
 - giving landlords a choice of young people
 - putting forward young people who have done some life skills or tenancy training
 - providing assistance or advice with tenancy matters (e.g. HMO (houses in multiple occupation) registering)
- Dispersed/step-down housing – helping care leavers move gradually into independent living. Some supported housing providers have dispersed housing attached to their projects, usually as shared tenancies, that allow young people with higher support needs to try out managing their own tenancy within the safety of a housing project they already know. Tenancies can be available for several months or longer until the young person is ready to move out. In these arrangements, it may be that the local authority or the provider organisation has agreed a lease or license with a private landlord and is then sub-letting to young people. This can be a good way to establish longer-term arrangements that can be closely managed by the local authority.

Support to use a ‘setting up home’ allowance – care leavers are entitled to a one-off grant when they leave care, usually worth around £2,000. Depending on their

living situation when they leave care, young people may need some of the money immediately, but others are more likely to need it only when they are ready to furnish their own independent housing.

Example

Crisis has developed a training toolkit aimed at support staff who are working with young people to educate them about living in the private rented sector. The toolkit explains tenants' rights, and clarifies some myths – for example those around eviction and rental increases. It also provides links to other tenancy training programmes.⁴⁷

Top tips

- Consider the option of shared social housing for care leavers or other young people.
- Housing teams are the experts in working with private landlords, and are likely to have a private rented access scheme. Rather than developing a different scheme, try to work with what is already there. This could include taking properties on lease or license, and sub-letting to young people as part of their progression to independence.
- When assisting care leavers to find suitable accommodation, personal advisers are required to make sure that the choice is affordable within the young person's income. It is important that personal advisers help young people to work out how they will continue to pay for their accommodation if they are living in the private rented sector after their housing benefit reduces at age 22 to the level of the shared accommodation rate. Otherwise there is a real risk that care leavers could lose their housing. Many care leavers will no longer have a personal adviser when they are 22, so advanced planning is critical.
- Care leavers who experience multiple moves sometimes risk their property being damaged or lost due to them not being in a position to protect or store their possessions. Under Section 93 of the 2014 Act, the local authority has a duty to make arrangements to protect or store the property in circumstances where, for example, the young person is ill or unable to afford to pay for storage.

⁴⁷ Crisis (2015) *Move on to private renting: A guide to training support staff*. Available at: <http://www.crisis.org.uk/pages/move-on-to-private-renting.html> accessed 19th September 2016



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Annex 1: The legal framework

Leaving care legislation

Care leavers in Wales have a range of entitlements set out in legislation to ensure that they are properly housed. In addition, care leavers receive some additional support through the general homelessness legislation. This section sets out the key legislation and its interpretation through case law.

Part 6 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Care Leavers (Wales) Regulations 2015 set out various duties that local authorities have towards young people in and leaving care, including those relating to accommodation. The duties differ depending on care leaver status (which is grouped into four categories) but the general requirements are that local authorities should:

- plan with young people and involve them in decisions
- 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
- consider education, training and employment needs
- 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 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.

The guidance states that it is 'good practice for local authorities to commission a range of semi-independent and independent living options with appropriate support, for example supported accommodation schemes, foyers, supported lodgings and access to independent tenancies in the social and private rented sectors with flexible support'.⁴⁸ It also advises that 'provision and partnerships should be developed in such a way as to permit young people to move to

⁴⁸ Welsh Government (2014) *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014: Part 6 Code of Practice (Looked After and Accommodated Children)* p112. Available at: <http://gov.wales/docs/phhs/publications/160106pt6en.pdf>, accessed 19 September 2016

other accommodation in a crisis, including returning to more supportive accommodation if appropriate'.⁴⁹

It also states that 'Children's Services will need to work with housing strategy, housing options, housing related support functions and other partners to secure a range of suitable housing and support options for young people leaving care'.⁵⁰

In Wales statutory guidance has recently been strengthened to require local authorities to make 'exhaustive efforts' to avoid the use of bed and breakfast⁵¹ accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 sets out additional requirements on local authorities regarding looked after children's accommodation. Section 75 of the 2014 Act requires local authorities to:

Take steps that secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within the authority's area which meets the needs of children that the local authority is looking after, and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is in the local authority's area (this is defined as 'the sufficient duty').⁵²

A 2010 judgement from the Court of Appeal clarified the duty on children's services authorities to provide accommodation for care leavers aged over 18 (defined as category 3 young people) in certain circumstances. *R (on the application of SO) v Barking and Dagenham*⁵³ concluded that:

'...If the former relevant child is unable to access appropriate accommodation through some other means (such as through a combination of a council tenancy and housing benefit), and the provision of accommodation is necessary for that young person's welfare, then social services will be under a duty to provide or arrange suitable accommodation.'

The Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016⁵⁴ was passed in January 2016. It aims to change the regulation and inspection of social care in Wales, placing quality and improvement at the heart of regulation, strengthening protection for those who need it, and ensuring services deliver high quality care and support. The Act supports the aims of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 which enshrines the rights of people using care and support services into law.

Housing and homelessness legislation

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p113

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p112

⁵¹ Welsh Government (2016) *Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on the Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness*, pp299-300. Available at: <http://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/160324-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities-on-allocation-of-accommodation-and-homelessness-en.pdf>, accessed 19 September 2016

⁵² Welsh Government (2014) *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014*, section 75. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2014/4/section/75/enacted>, accessed 19 September 2016

⁵³ <http://www.maxwellgillott.com/pdf/accommodation-former-relevant-children>

⁵⁴ Welsh Government (2016) *Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016*. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2016/2/contents>, accessed 19 September 2016

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014⁵⁵ sets out requirements on local authorities to assist people who are homeless. Part 2 requires that local authorities assist those homeless applicants who are eligible for assistance (broadly, those whose immigration status is not restricted) by:

- Carrying out an assessment to determine whether they are homeless or threatened with homelessness
- Drafting a personal housing plan or similar to include reasonable steps to be taken by the local authority and the applicant to prevent homelessness or help to secure accommodation (with a 56 day time limit)
- Providing suitable temporary accommodation during the 56 days to an applicant in priority (specified categories of people)
- If no suitable accommodation has been found at the end of the 56 days, securing suitable accommodation to those in priority need and not intentionally homeless. Local authorities may refer an applicant who has no local connection to another local authority, subject to some exceptions.

In addition, local authorities can use their discretion regarding whether a household has a local connection.

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 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. It places a duty on local authorities to adopt a strategy in 2018, with engagement from social services departments. Authorities must take the strategy into account in discharging their functions.

The Welsh Government's statutory Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on the Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness⁵⁶ sets out requirements on local housing authorities 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 that:

- 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

⁵⁵ Welsh Government (2014) *Housing (Wales) Act 2014*. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2014/7/contents>, accessed 19 September 2016

⁵⁶ Welsh Government (2016) *Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on the Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness*. Available at: <http://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/160324-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities-on-allocation-of-accommodation-and-homelessness-en.pdf>, accessed 19 September 2016

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 or the housing authority is for individual authorities to determine in each case. There should be jointly agreed protocols in place regarding the assessment of needs.

G v Southwark

In May 2009, the House of Lords made a landmark judgement in the case of R (G) v London Borough of Southwark⁵⁷ which affects how local authorities provide accommodation and support for homeless 16 and 17-year-olds. The judgement ruled that:

- the primary duty to a homeless 16 or 17-year-old is under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, and the ongoing duty to accommodate and support that young person will fall to children's services. This will include the range of support available as a looked after child and a care leaver.
- a homeless 16 or 17-year-old who applies to a housing authority should be provided with interim accommodation under the homelessness legislation. They should then be referred to children's services for an assessment of their needs under section 21 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.

Local connection and homelessness

Under Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, which covers homelessness. There are sections which allow one authority to pass the homelessness duty on to another. Local connection is a discretionary test in homelessness assessments, but in reality all local authorities will apply the test in most cases, (cases in which someone is fleeing violence should not be considered for referral).

Under section 81 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, a person has a local connection with the district of a local housing authority if she or he has a connection with it:

- a. because s/he is, or in the past was, normally resident there, and that residence was of his own choice
- b. because s/he is employed there
- c. because of family associations
- d. because of special circumstances.⁵⁸

The Code of Guidance to Local Authorities on the Allocation of Accommodation

⁵⁷ <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/2010/12/20/southwark-judgement>

⁵⁸ Welsh Government (2014) Housing (Wales) Act 2014, section 81. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2014/7/section/81>, accessed 19 September 2016

and Homelessness states the following in relation to care leavers at risk of homelessness and local connection:

18.9: In the case of young people in the looked after system who have been placed out of area, where they are leaving care and wish to return to the area to which they were originally connected they should be accepted as having a connection with the area, even where they have been placed for a considerable time elsewhere. In assessing whether an applicant's household has a local connection with their area, an Authority should also consider whether any person who might reasonably be expected to live with the applicant has such a connection. Care leavers who wish to remain in the area of placement should also be considered to have a local connection should they meet the local connection test.⁵⁹

So if a care-leaver has been placed out of area and wishes to return to his or her original area, the authority of the original area must accept local connection with it.

Local connection and allocation of social housing

The allocation of social housing is covered in Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996.⁶⁰ Section 167 (2A) requires a local authority through their allocation scheme to give applicants who fall within a 'reasonable preference' category a head-start in the queue for social housing. Reasonable preference categories include those owed any homeless duty under the Housing Act, people living in unfit or overcrowded housing, or who have a medical or disability issue that is affected by their housing, and those applicants who would face hardship if they did not obtain social housing. Many local authorities include care leavers as a group that fall into a reasonable preference category, but there is not necessarily a statutory requirement to do so, as it depends on the local authority criteria set in their allocation policy as to whether hardship qualifies for an award of reasonable preference.

Young people who have been living in out-of-authority placements and wish to stay in that local area when they leave care (rather than returning to the local authority area where they are looked after) may need to provide evidence that they have a local connection. However, unless the allocation scheme specifies how local connection is being interpreted beyond the four areas of residence, employment, family association and special reasons, then each case should be considered on its own merits. For example, a housing authority might consider that a family association could include being placed with foster carers in that local authority area, or that being in care and placed in that local authority area could be

⁵⁹ Welsh Government (2016) *Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on the Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness*, p282. Available at: <http://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/160324-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities-on-allocation-of-accommodation-and-homelessness-en.pdf>, accessed 19 September 2016

⁶⁰ UK Government (1996) *Housing Act 1996, Part 6*. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/part/VI>, accessed 19 September 2016

Questions to ask your teams

- The legislation and case law relating to care leavers and their housing can be complicated, and can affect young people in different ways and at different times. How well do staff in your leaving care and housing teams know the legal context?
- In thinking about what housing young people can access, what access do they have to finances? Young people may be entitled to different funding sources, depending on their past experiences and their current situation. Are your teams up to date on the funding sources available? They might include:
 - Housing benefit
 - Low income benefits
 - Entitlements to tax credits
 - Universal Credit
 - Local welfare assistance
 - Council tax support schemes
 - Child benefits
 - Disability benefits
 - Junior ISA
 - Setting up home allowance (leaving care grant)
 - Funds from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme

Annex 2: Joint commissioning to improve outcomes for young people

What are the drivers for change towards a joint commissioning model?

Recent and ongoing pressures on local authorities are making joint or co-commissioning an increasingly attractive proposition to support young people. These factors include:

- reduced public sector spending generally requires a radical re-think in terms of how services are delivered to vulnerable groups
- increased numbers of looked after children between 2011 and 2014 in Wales (though there was a drop in 2015) have resulted in more young people becoming care leavers, and anecdotal reporting of higher proportions of young people with multiple and complex needs
- the duty on local authorities since 2011 to provide sufficient suitable accommodation for looked after children in their area
- moves towards more combined authority working, a forerunner of the forthcoming merging of local authorities, offer opportunities for more flexible commissioning across public service areas and local authority boundaries
- reducing the costs of tenancy failure, which fall on landlord revenues and increase burdens on services which help young people when tenancies have gone wrong.

Why consider a joint approach?

We know from practice and research that young people do best with:

- practical and emotional preparation for independence
- gradual, supported transitions with choice, control and flexibility about where they live, how they are supported and how quickly things change
- follow up support as needed.

Services commissioned by different parts of an authority, where there is no join up strategically or operationally, are more likely to result in:

- 'compressed' transitions, such as a cliff-edge of support at 18th birthday
- minimal choice of options for young people
- tenancy breakdowns as young people move to their own tenancies before they are ready
- poor contingency planning and increased frequency of placement breakdowns
- costs associated with duplication and gaps, with common pressure points often not addressed (e.g. emergencies or high risk situations)

- poor value for money through spot purchasing of high-cost housing and support options when all else fails.

Experience shows that local authorities can achieve efficiencies and better outcomes for care leavers by children's services and Supporting People commissioners undertaking joint or co-commissioning. This has several clear advantages:

- development of more options generally, based on the range of needs and progression
- creating options for young people that avoid the 'cliff edge' at 18, so that moves are based on readiness, not age
- sharing of procurement expertise including approaches to quality and standards
- reduced costs in undertaking procurement
- improved value for money.

This could be for all supported accommodation provision where the local market and context indicates advantages to this – or it could be for smaller schemes of more specialist provision.

Approaches to joint commissioning

Partners will need to agree a commissioning strategy focused on:

- delivering agreed outcomes for young people, including education, training and employment. Future housing options and sustainability are increasingly predicated on young people being economic active
- contributing to local or combined authority strategic objectives
- enabling partners to meet their statutory duties.

This is all within a context of known and/or anticipated resource constraints. It is critical that the right people are involved from the outset, so that any decision to go ahead has been informed by young people, families and other key stakeholders, and has the support and understanding of those who will make it.

Which young people are we talking about?	Most common main funding streams
Looked after children and care leavers aged 16 or 17	Children's services
Children who become looked after at age 16 or 17	Children's services
16 and 17-year-olds who have experienced homelessness but do not become looked after	Supporting People, Children's services (plus housing benefit)
Care leavers aged 18 plus	Supporting People/Housing Related Support, children's services (plus HB)
Other young people aged 18-25 who have experienced or been at risk of homelessness	Supporting People, children's services (plus housing benefit)
Young people provided with temporary accommodation under homelessness legislation	Housing authority temporary accommodation. Budgets from general funds (plus housing benefit)
Young people who experience tenancy failure	Social and private landlords and a wide range of agencies supporting young people
* A housing benefit subsidy system is in place whereby the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) reimburses housing authorities for the rental costs of temporary accommodation up to set levels for different types of temporary accommodation	

What risks need managing to ensure effective joint commissioning?

Risk	Mitigation
Ensuring the suitability of accommodation for care leavers	<p>Clear contract management focused on outcomes for young people, including engagement in education, training and employment</p> <p>Joint working to agree service specifications</p>
Loss of flexibility (e.g. spot purchase) for those with particular needs which will not easily be met with the core set of options	Consider use of procurement tools like framework agreements for some more specialist provision
‘Protectionism’ of services	<p>Commission a range of types of accommodation to meet young people’s varying needs</p> <p>Manage access through a single gateway</p> <p>Agree mechanisms for prioritising certain groups if necessary</p>
Logistical problems with different commissioning timeframes	<p>Shortterm – negotiate contract variations with partners</p> <p>Long-term – map commissioning timeframes in your strategy then plan in stages to bring them in line</p>
Budget cuts	<p>Secure corporate, strategic buy-in through making long-term business case of continued investment based on outcomes and cost benefits</p> <p>Be transparent with core partners, ensuring financial pressures are clear and acknowledged</p>

Providers bring other resources or funding solutions into tenders to win on price but these may not be sustainable in the longer term	<p>Adopt realistic pricing expectations for the services required</p> <p>Test funding models and solutions at the commissioning stage against known or possible changes (for example, the future changes/ direction of Housing Benefit costs for supported accommodation)</p>
Failure to link accommodation and support requirements	Involve strategic housing, social landlord and Housing Options Services from the outset



Annex 3: Self-assessment: How joined up is your commissioning?

On a scale of 0–5, and using the suggested set of statements to guide you, rank where you think your local authority is on joint commissioning for support to young people as they learn to live more independently.

- 0 No progress at all and it's not looking possible currently
- 1 No progress and we haven't made a start yet
- 2 Some early progress. We have agreed in principle but taken no practical steps as yet
- 3 We are beginning to work on this now with a clear aim of joint Commissioning
- 4 It's well underway now
- 5 It's well embedded and it's positive

Statements relating to joint commissioning that may help your judgment

- There are agreed and shared corporate outcomes for young people who leave care, and these outcomes are used for commissioning of accommodation and support.
- All relevant services and stakeholders have contributed to a detailed needs analysis, which informs the commissioning process.
- Children's services, housing and housing-related support commissioners (and any others) work together on service/pathway modelling, drawing up specifications for services and involvement in the commissioning process.
- Relevant budgets are agreed across the local authority (and other public sector agencies) and either pooled or managed seamlessly across directorates/service areas.
- The local authority consciously avoids 'cliff edges' based on age, e.g. young people having to make a placement move around their 18th birthday.
- Access into the provision available is managed through a single point/gateway so we know who is in what provision and can better manage risk and meet needs.
- There's a body/group led by children's services and housing related support commissioners which meets regularly to review, monitor and agree changes to commissioning of accommodation and support options.
- There is a process for agreeing move on/progression into more independent accommodation (e.g. a panel, an assessment, an accreditation achieved by the young person).
- There is a high expectation of providers of accommodation and support services (for example, having a theory of change, their ability to be flexible, to partner strategically with the local authority, a 'can do' attitude, innovation, and bringing added value)

Annex 4: Summary for lead members and directors of children's services

The care leavers accommodation and support framework for Wales is based on the English version produced in 2015 by Barnardo's and St Basils. The Welsh framework has been adapted by Barnardo's Cymru and Shelter Cymru, together with leaving care providers, youth housing providers, local authorities and Welsh Government representatives. It reflects the specific legislation and rights affecting care leavers in Wales, as well as providing examples that are relevant to their housing experiences. Young people leaving care have also contributed their views to improving accommodation support for those at risk of homelessness in Wales.

The care leavers accommodation and support framework for Wales is intended to be used alongside Preventing Homelessness and Promoting Independence: A Positive Pathway to Adulthood.⁶¹ The framework builds on this document but reflects the specific legislation and rights affecting care leavers

New housing legislation provides an opportunity to prevent homelessness among care leavers through improved strategic planning and earlier joint planning linked to pathway planning (Whalen, 2015)⁶² Care leavers and other vulnerable young people aged 18 to 20, and all 16 and 17-year-olds, are a priority needs group under this legislation.⁶³ New social services legislation must pay due regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which is enshrined in law in Wales and applies to all young people up to the age of 18.

The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 also has a preventative focus. It aims to improve the wellbeing of those with care and support needs, and like the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 it plans to achieve this by giving people an equal say in the support they receive, and by driving partnership and cooperation in service delivery⁶⁴ 'Having a good home' is one of the eight elements which make up the statement of what 'wellbeing' means, and around which service delivery and outcomes measurement is focused.

The framework is not prescriptive but gives a model – based on a wide range of expertise – for how young people can be supported as they leave care. It has been developed for commissioners and managers of leaving care and housing services, but can also be useful for elected members and senior officials to review existing or plan future provision in their local area. The framework is flexible, reflecting current innovation and knowledge, and can be adapted to suit local needs and circumstances.

61 *St Basils (2015) Developing Positive Pathways to Adulthood: Supporting young people on their journey to economic independence and success through housing advice, options and homelessness prevention.* Available at: <http://gov.wales/topics/housing-and-regeneration/services-and-support/homelessness/youth-homelessness/>, accessed June 2016

62 Whalen, A (2015) *Provision for Young Care Leavers at Risk of Homelessness.* Public Policy Institute for Wales. Available at: <http://ppiw.org.uk/ppiw-report-publication-provision-for-young-care-leavers-at-risk-of-homelessness/>, accessed 19 September 2015

63 Ibid

64 *Welsh Government (2014) Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014: The Essentials*, p3. Available at: <http://gov.wales/docs/dhss/publications/160127socialservicesacten.pdf>, accessed 19 September 2016

The framework identifies five stages that young people may experience as they leave care. Although the stages are not always sequential, they have been identified to help local authorities and service providers think through the range of areas in which young people will need housing support as they leave care. While the five stages give practical ideas for delivering good services, the framework is based on some underlying principles to give young people the best start possible as they leave care, and the attitude of the corporate parent is key to making the framework work well. These include helping care leavers to succeed, allowing 'mistakes' without harsh penalties, offering flexible support, and providing unconditional relationships.

The framework also relies on different parts of a local authority working well together. Experience from all those using an accommodation pathway model demonstrates that effective joint working between housing and children's services, as well as with health, education, training and employment agencies, criminal justice partners, the voluntary sector and the private sector, is an essential driver of a successful pathway approach. This is 'corporate parenting' in action.

Annex 5:

Engaging children and young people in using the framework locally

Information to share with children's and young people's groups

The care leavers accommodation and support framework has been produced by a group of charities that work with young people, including care leavers. Although it's aimed at people who work in the local authority, young people have been involved in helping decide what should go in the framework.

The framework brings together lots of good ideas from across the country about what can help young people with their housing as they move out of care. It doesn't tell your local authority what to do, but it does give them a lot of suggestions about what works in other areas – and so what might be good for young people where you live.

For example, it gives ideas about what young people need while they are still in care and are starting to think about the next step for them. It also looks at what different sorts of housing choices might be available for young people leaving care, and it gives ideas for what support is most helpful if a care leaver finds themselves having a problem with their housing.

We want to know what you think about the framework and how it could be changed for our area. We need to be upfront and honest with you because, like everywhere in Wales, there are some limits on the housing choices we have to offer young people. But based on what options are available, we would like to know more about what would work best for you, what we can do to improve things and also any ideas you have for changing things.

Ideas for engaging children and young people in use of the framework locally

- Share the one-page framework diagram with existing participation groups. Ask children currently in care and those leaving care about:
 - In which areas does our local authority do well for care leavers?
 - Where are there gaps in what our local authority provides for care leavers?
 - Which groups of care leavers in our area do you think would need particular support around housing?
 - What do you think about some of the suggested services in the framework and whether they would work locally? (Examples could include: training flats; mediation; peer landlord or shared housing schemes; Housing First).
- Review care leavers' pathway plans to assess what is working well and where there are gaps in existing provision. This will assist with engaging those young people who are not involved in participation groups. Ask personal advisers as part of their regular catch-ups to find out what care leavers think about current provision and what could change.

- Invite a group of children in care and care leavers to meet with the lead member and/or director of children's services. With the framework in mind, facilitate a guided discussion about what currently works and where there could be improvements in the local housing services for care leavers.
- Carry out informal focus groups or discussions with young people about to leave care who are in different placement settings in your area. Do young people leaving foster care, in When I am Ready arrangements, in residential care or living in 'other arrangements' have different views about what housing support they need? What about those who are or have been in custody, or with physical disabilities or mental health issues?

Annex 6: Demonstrating the costs and benefits of housing options for care leavers

In making the case for funding, it is often very useful to be able to demonstrate the implications of not taking action to support care leavers to have a good housing pathway. This could be done through a formal cost-benefit or social return on investment (SROI) analysis, or more informally using existing tools that are available.

The Department for Communities and Local Government has produced an Evidence Review of the Costs of Homelessness (2012)⁶⁵ which explores the costs to central government of homelessness in adults. This can be used to provide evidence for some of the wider costs of homelessness to the welfare system, the criminal justice system and health providers, among others.

Homeless Link's guide, What's It Worth? (2013)⁶⁶ explains how to carry out simple financial savings analysis on services, including providing links to unit costs and sources of further assistance.

⁶⁵ Department for Communities and Local Government (2012) *Evidence Review of the Costs of Homelessness*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7596/2200485.pdf, accessed 19 September 2016

⁶⁶ Homeless Link (2013) *What's it Worth? Guidance on using financial savings analysis in the homelessness sector*. Available at: www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/What's%20it%20worth.pdf, accessed 19 September 2016

Annex 7:

Blank copy of the framework

This blank version of the framework (opposite) can be copied and used to map and develop your care leavers accommodation and support framework locally.

Care leavers accommodation and support framework

Supporters				Activity and approach			
Framework stages and options							
Housing worker							
Personal adviser							
Carer/residential worker							
1. Prepare for reality of housing options							
2. Plan young people's accommodation and support options with them							
3. Reduce housing crisis							
4. Access housing and support as needed							
Short-stay/Emergency	High support	Medium support	Low support				
5. Access and successfully manage longer-term move-on and support options							

Underlying principles – young people are:

- given as much information, choice and control as possible
- able to make mistakes and never ‘fall out’ of the framework
- offered flexible support that adapts to meet their needs
- offered supportive and unconditional relationships
- the shared responsibility of their corporate parent.

Care leavers accommodation and support framework

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