

Joint working between Housing and Children's Services

Preventing homelessness and tackling its effects on children and young people



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and young people**

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Summary

The Government is committed to reducing and preventing homelessness. The negative impact that homelessness can have on peoples' lives is well documented and the Government recognised the poor start to children's lives that homelessness and periods in poor quality temporary accommodation gives when it published *More than a Roof* in 2002¹. Since then, and the introduction of the Homelessness Act 2002, local authorities have been required to adopt strategies to prevent homelessness in their areas, an approach which has resulted in significant reductions in new cases of homelessness across England. This makes local authorities well placed to meet the Government's target to halve the use of temporary accommodation by 2010, which was set in its five year homelessness strategy published in March 2005, *Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives*.

Whilst new cases of homelessness have been reducing, the number of young people becoming homeless has remained disproportionately high, reducing the life chances of too many 16 and 17 year olds and young care leavers. That is why the Government introduced a series of measures in 2006 as part of a youth homelessness strategy which included a commitment to end the use of bed & breakfast accommodation for this age group by housing authorities, except in emergencies.

This action was reinforced by the June 2007 White Paper, *Care Matters, Time for Change*, which set out how the Government intend to transform outcomes for children in care.

In order to ensure that children and young people who are at risk of homelessness receive the support they need it is important that the various statutory services in place to protect them are joined up. Evidence suggests cases where children and young people are passed between services and their housing needs, for example, considered in isolation from their employment, training or health needs. There are some excellent examples of good practice in this area where services work together to take a more holistic view of children's and young people's needs and this guidance highlights a small number of them.

It is clear that where services work best together there are good joint working arrangements at a strategic level within local authorities and with their partners in the Children's Trust. This guidance is, therefore, aimed at strategic managers in Housing Services, Children's Services and their partner agencies.

Within the framework of improving local authority services, provided within the White Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, the Government has recognised the importance of a strategic approach to service delivery which is emphasised in its own measures and indicators within cross-Government Public Service Agreements (PSAs) and Departmental Strategic Objectives (DSOs).

¹ *More than a Roof: A report into tackling homelessness*, ODPM (2003)

This guidance fulfils a commitment between Communities and Local Government and the Department for Children, Schools and Families to work together to achieve key strategic objectives.

The guidance focuses on four groups of children and young people who have been identified as being at particular risk of poor outcomes in the absence of effective joint working between Housing Services, Children's Services and their partners:

- 16 and 17 year olds who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- care leavers aged 18 to 21
- children of families living in temporary accommodation
- children of families who have been, or are at risk of being, found intentionally homeless by a housing authority.

The Government recognises that some people will feature in more than one of these groups, so that for example a care leaver may also be a single parent living in temporary accommodation as result of experiencing homelessness. Services must be flexible enough to address the different ways in which homelessness affects individuals.

This guidance includes case studies of good and emerging practice together with links to other guidance, information and resources available to assist strategic managers and commissioners to implement change.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 The guide

This guidance is for strategic managers in Housing Services, Children's Services and their partner agencies. It is focused on the strategic drivers for change, the desired outcomes for children, young people and families and the joint working approaches needed to meet them.

This is non-statutory guidance. It is designed to assist local authorities in the exercise of their powers and duties in respect of joint working to meet the needs of children and young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

It does not offer operational guidance but instead provides links to a wide range of existing resources which will support authorities to affect change.

The guidance has been jointly prepared by Communities and Local Government and the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). Its purpose is to help the strategic managers of Children's Services and Housing Services, in both unitary and two tier authorities, to plan and deliver change to achieve three things for young people and children living with their families:

- prevent homelessness
- minimise the negative impact of homelessness on their lives and life chances
- make sure they receive the co-ordinated services and support they need to recover from the impact of homelessness and get their lives back on track, including maintaining or returning to their journey through learning or work.

The challenge for Children's Services and Housing Services is to ensure that there are no gaps between services, and that young people and children living in families get quick access to the services they need regardless of which service they approach for help first. This is consistent with the Government's Every Child Matters programme for better integrated services to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.

The Children Act (2004) (section 10) sets out a statutory requirement for local authorities and their 'relevant' partners to cooperate to improve children's well-being.

The guide applies to four groups of children and young people who have been identified as being at particular risk of poor outcomes in the absence of effective joint working between housing services and children's services and their partners:

- 16 and 17 year olds who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- care leavers aged 18 to 21
- children of families living in temporary accommodation
- children of families who have been, or are at risk of being, found intentionally homeless by a housing authority.

The guidance is based on research into existing effective and emerging practice and draws into one place the key elements of current government policy, guidance and relevant legislation in the fields of homelessness and children's services.

The remainder of the introduction sets out the context and policy drivers for this guidance. Chapter 2 covers cross-cutting practice areas, then a short chapter on joint working for each client group sets out:

- the key risks facing children and young people
- the main outcomes to be delivered through joint working
- a checklist of the areas of work authorities will need to cover in partnership to achieve these outcomes.

Case studies are presented throughout to illustrate possible approaches and the appendices include summaries of relevant legal duties and powers, practice summaries for a number of key activities, and a list of tools and resources available to support good practice.

1.2 The Policy context

New Performance Framework for local authorities and local authority partnerships

In October 2006 Communities and Local Government published the White Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, which focused on improving local authority services. It proposed a new relationship between local and central Government which would require central Government to be clearer about its priorities and allow local authorities greater freedom and flexibility.

Set out in the White Paper is a new local performance framework based on a set of 198 national indicators. These will form the core of Local Area Agreements (LAAs) based on agreed local priorities (up to 35 of the national indicators can have targets set against them in the Local Area Agreement). From April 2009 authorities will be assessed using the new Comprehensive Area Assessment.

The new performance framework represents the most powerful driver yet for improved collaboration across public services because the outcomes and indicators are owned by local authorities and local strategic partnerships rather than by single local authority departments.

Joint working to prevent and tackle homelessness for young people and children living with their family will contribute to improvements in local performance against several of the indicators from the national set. Appendix 3 outlines the key elements of the performance framework and identifies some of the most relevant indicators, along with the specific Public Service Agreements (PSAs) and Departmental Strategic Objectives they help to underpin. Leaders in Housing Services and Children's Services can use them as levers for gaining top level commitment to change.

Find the new performance framework at:

www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/performanceframeworkpartnerships/

Three Public Service Agreements pertinent to this guidance are:

PSA 14: Increase the number of children and young people on the path to success

Most young people do well at school, make a successful transition to adulthood, and go on to have successful careers and families. Some young people are at risk of falling behind their peers and need additional support to improve their chances of success later in life. These same young people can be particularly at risk of homelessness and poor housing due to their family circumstances. This PSA includes measures to reduce the number of teenage conceptions (and hence teenage parents), reduce substance misuse and rates of first-time offending among young people, reduce the number of young people who are not in education, training or employment, and increase the number of young people participating in positive activities.

Find the PSA 14 Delivery agreement at:

www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/1/1/pbr_csr07_psa14.pdf

PSA 16: Increase the proportion of socially excluded adults in settled accommodation and education, training or employment

PSA 16 provides a cross-Government focus on improving the life chances of socially excluded adults. The PSA aims to increase the proportion of vulnerable adults who have a home and are in a job, education or training – the core foundations of a stable, positive life. Over the coming three years the Social Exclusion Task Force will be working across Whitehall and with stakeholders in other sectors to develop policies that will help increase the proportion of care leavers in suitable accommodation and employment, education or training.

Find more information about PSA 16 at:

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/psa.aspx

PSA 20: Increase long term housing supply and affordability

PSA 20 includes measures to bring about increases in housing supply across all tenures, including affordable and social homes. The delivery plan encourages local authorities to work with partners in the statutory and voluntary sectors to prevent homelessness and meet the needs of people who have experienced homelessness. The Government's commitment to halve the use of temporary accommodation under the homelessness legislation to 50,500 households by 2010 is driven through this PSA.

Find the PSA 20 Delivery agreement at:

www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/9/D/pbr_csr07_psa20.pdf

Five Year Homelessness Strategy: *Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives*

In March 2005 the Government published its strategy for tackling homelessness which took a cross-Government approach to identifying the many and complex causes of homelessness and introduced a programme of action to resolve them. The strategy confirmed the Government's commitment to reduce the damaging effects of homelessness, in particular by setting a target to halve the use of temporary accommodation by 2010. As a result of effective action by central and local Government and the voluntary sector this target is on course to be met, and exceeded in some areas.

As part of the programme to implement the homelessness strategy the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government announced a package of measures to further prevent and tackle youth homelessness in November 2006:

- a commitment that, by 2010, 16 and 17 year olds will not be placed in bed and breakfast hotels unless it is an emergency,
- improving access to homelessness mediation across the country (including family mediation for young people), so that there is a universal expectation of such services
- establishing supported lodgings schemes across the country, providing accommodation and advice for young people who can no longer stay in the family home.

This announcement recognised the ongoing disproportionate representation of young people accepted as homeless and in priority need by local housing authorities (and therefore owed the main homelessness duty to secure accommodation). 16/17 year olds and care leavers aged 18 – 20 years represented 8 per cent of total homeless acceptances by local housing authorities in England in 2007, yet this cohort makes up just 3 per cent of the population.

Find the strategy at:

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/sustainablecommunitiessettled

and the National Youth Homelessness Scheme website at:

www.communities.gov.uk/youthhomelessness

The local authority strategic housing role

Local authorities are expected to take a strategic approach to housing by playing a strong role in addressing the housing needs of all residents in their area, across all tenures, as part of their place shaping role. Authorities are responsible for assessing and planning for the current and future housing needs of local people, including children and young people, and setting out their arrangements for planning and commissioning housing support services. Collaboration with partners to meet housing needs is also a key aspect of the strategic housing role.

Find Good Practice in Place-shaping and the Strategic Housing Role (IDeA, 2008) at:

www.idea.gov.uk/idk/aio/8222866

The Children's Plan

In December 2007 DCSF launched *The Children's Plan: Building Better Futures*. It sets out the Government's plans to achieve the aim of making England the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up. The principles underpinning the plan include:

- services need to be shaped by and responsive to children, young people and families, not designed around professional boundaries
- it is always better to prevent failure than tackle a crisis later.

Poor quality housing is recognised in the plan as a particular problem for poor families and there is a commitment to prioritise children's needs in housing decisions, especially the need to stay close to services like schools.

Find the Children's plan at:

www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/childrensplan/

Every Child Matters and Targeted Youth Support

The Government recognises the importance of preventing and tackling homelessness as part of its work to promote better integration and cooperation between services to deliver improved outcomes for children young people and their families. The five Every Child Matters outcomes for children and young people are:

- Stay Safe
- Be Healthy
- Enjoy and Achieve
- Make a Positive Contribution
- Achieve Economic Wellbeing

The Targeted Youth Support Strategy (April 2007) also highlights the need for local authorities to remodel services to deliver “Every Child Matters for at risk young people” by December 2008. The Targeted Youth Support policy recognises the importance of prevention work with vulnerable teenagers to prevent future problems, even where they do not meet current thresholds for Children's Services. Housing and supporting people services are identified among the list of agencies who should be involved in the reforms.

Find information and guidance on Targeted Youth Support at:

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00206/

Care Matters – Time for Change

In June 2007 Government issued its White Paper *Care Matters – Time for Change* setting out how Government intends to transform outcomes for children in care.

Access to stable accommodation, with suitable support if necessary, was identified by young people as a very pressing and real need. In authorities where housing and children's services work effectively in partnership, young people leaving care have planned access to a range of options to provide them with future accommodation. However, still too many care leavers are left without the necessary support, get into housing difficulties and have to seek assistance under the homelessness legislation.

Find information and guidance on Care Matters -Time for Change at:

www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/timeforchange/

The Social Exclusion Task Force's 'Families at Risk' review

This examined the experience of families with multiple and complex needs. The first report *Reaching Out: Think Family* highlighted the link between parents facing multiple problems and poor outcomes for children. It examined the importance of joined up services in breaking this intergenerational cycle of underachievement and disadvantage. The second report *Think Family: Improving the Life Chances of Families at Risk* showed that systems and services need to 'think family'. Contact with any service should provide an open door into an integrated system of support.

Find the reports at:

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/families_at_risk.aspx

Chapter 2

Cross-cutting practice areas

2.1 Introduction

The key elements underpinning effective joint work to prevent and mitigate the effects of homelessness on children and young people are:

- the development of joint protocols
- a shared ethos of prevention
- making strategic connections and developing shared strategic objectives and targets
- effective use of joint resources to achieve shared aims
- sharing information
- use of the Common Assessment Framework
- involving children, young people and parents.

2.2 Joint protocols

Children and young people in the four client groups at the centre of this guidance are at risk unless Housing Services and Children's Services work together, with relevant partners, to ensure they receive appropriate services as close as possible to the point of need.

Consistent, reliable and sustainable joint working can only be achieved through formal agreements between the relevant agencies, referred to in this guidance as joint protocols. Joint protocols enable partners and services users to understand their roles and confidently engage in joint working. They lead to better communication, increased and more effective joint working and better outcomes for clients. In recognition of this the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities requires authorities to set out the processes that underpin and enable joint working and information sharing in both unitary and two tier areas.

A joint protocol should set out the jointly agreed vision, objectives, systems and processes intended to achieve the following:

- prevent homelessness
- make sure people get the housing-related and other support they need without being passed between services unnecessarily

- ensure access to suitable accommodation when homelessness cannot be prevented.

Housing and Children's Services Authorities and departments will want to consider which agencies should be involved in the development and implementation of joint protocols to meet specific objectives. This may, for example, include Youth Offending Teams, Connexions Services, schools, colleges and training providers, Youth Services and voluntary sector agencies. In two tier areas all housing authorities in the county should be party to a joint protocol.

A joint protocol should set out the following:

- the partners
- vision and scope
- aims, objectives, planned outcomes and indicators of success
- roles and responsibilities of partners:
 - the responsible senior officer in each service or agency and how they will work together to lead and manage the delivery of services through the protocol.
 - which services are to be delivered, who is responsible for each element, how and in what circumstances referrals between services are made and how information is shared. Process maps and flow charts showing how clients move through the services may be helpful.
- clear, concise and easily navigated tools and guidance to act as a manual to support staff in their roles.
- arrangements for resolving disputes between partners
- a system for monitoring and review of achievement against the objectives.

Each partner will need to satisfy themselves of the legal compliance of joint protocols with particular attention to information sharing and information security.

The County Durham joint protocol for homeless 16 and 17 year olds

County Durham is a two tier area incorporating Durham County Council and seven district councils, with a mix of rural and urban settlements. The County Durham Homelessness Action Partnership (HAP) is a countywide strategic group, a sub-group of which developed and oversees the operation of the joint protocol. This is supported by Centrepoin, which the HAP has commissioned through the local authorities to facilitate the process.

The aims of the protocol are to:

- Prevent homelessness amongst 16 and 17 year olds
- ensure they receive the support they need
- ensure they get access to appropriate and suitable accommodation where necessary.

This is to be achieved by:

- Increasing joint working between agencies to meet the needs of homeless (and threatened with homelessness) 16 and 17 year olds
- improving communication between the respective agencies.

The joint protocol covers the work of following service delivery partners:

- County Durham Children and Young People's Service
- the seven Housing Authorities
- Connexions
- County Durham Youth Engagement Service
- specifically commissioned voluntary sector organisations.

When a 16 or 17 year old at risk of homelessness seeks help from any of these agencies they carry out an assessment of housing and other support needs.

If the situation cannot be resolved immediately and a multi agency response is needed the assessing worker convenes a panel meeting. The young person, his or her parents or carers (where safe and appropriate) and relevant agencies are invited to this meeting where a plan of action is agreed. The multi-agency implementation of the plan is led and monitored by a lead agency identified at the panel meeting, usually one of the voluntary sector providers unless a more appropriate lead is identified.

During 2007, 316 young people were assisted through the joint protocol and homelessness was prevented or a housing option found for almost 7 in every 8. 41 young people were accepted as having the main homelessness duty owed to them.

Find the County Durham Joint Protocol tools and guidance at:

www.communities.gov.uk/youthhomelessness/aboutus/knowledgebase/resources/beingstrategicresources/casestudies1/

2.3 A shared ethos of prevention

Communities and Local Government and DCSF are both driving an increasingly prevention focused approach to services, now embodied in legislation, guidance and in the practice of local authorities across England.

The Change for Children agenda is firmly focused on early identification and intervention for children and young people at risk and one of the underpinning principles of the Children's Plan is that it is always better to prevent failure than tackle a crisis later.

The Pathway Planning framework for young people leaving care is designed to ensure smooth transitions and prevent crises due to poor planning and un-met needs.

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires local Housing Authorities to have a strategy for preventing homelessness and ensuring that accommodation and any necessary support will be available for people in the district who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The Social Services Authority must give any reasonable assistance required, and both the Housing and Social Services Authorities must take the strategy into account when exercising their functions. Strategies must be based on a review of homelessness in the district which, among other things, should:

- identify the services needed to prevent homelessness occurring or reoccurring
- identify resources currently available to meet these needs
- identify additional resources as required
- involve other public and voluntary agencies in partnership work to meet specific objectives.

Key to taking forward the homelessness prevention agenda has been the move to adopt a more pro-active, customer focused, problem-solving ethos now widely known as the 'housing options' approach. This is summarised in Appendix 6.

This shared direction of travel can be significantly advanced by working together to prevent and tackle homelessness and the consequences it brings for young people and children living with their family.

Find *Homelessness Prevention: A guide to good practice (2006)* at:
www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/homelessnessprevention

Find the National Youth homelessness Scheme website prevention pages at:
www.communities.gov.uk/youthhomelessness/prevention/

2.4 Strategic connections

If joint working in preventing and tackling homelessness and its effects is to be sustainable and attract necessary resources, it must be robustly linked to the strategic priorities and frameworks directing the work of the partners. This is the case in both unitary and two tier authorities.

Authorities should consider incorporating relevant objectives, backed by commitments to joint working approaches, into their strategic plans including:

- **Local Area Agreement**
- **Children and Young Peoples' Plan**
- **Housing and Homelessness Strategies**
- **Sustainable Communities Plan**
- **Regional Housing Strategy**

The partnership will also want to consider how best to use, develop links to, and influence other key strategies such as the Supporting People, Parenting and Teenage Pregnancy Strategies. Health partners in key cross agency partnerships such as the Children's Trust also need to be involved.

In order to develop detailed plans for joint working authorities will need to establish multi-agency planning processes involving Housing Services, Children's Services and other relevant agencies including Youth Offending Teams, Supporting People Teams, Parenting Strategy leads, social landlords and voluntary organisations. Partners should also ensure the early involvement of children, young people and parents in developing plans.

As Targeted Youth Support arrangements are rolled out around the country, Directors of Children's Services in both unitary and two-tier areas should ensure that housing, housing support and homelessness services are involved. The planning of joint work between Children's Services, Supporting People teams and Housing should be carried out in the context of the overall integrated and targeted youth support approach in the locality.

Officers responsible for strategy development and outcomes measurement in Children's Services and Housing Authorities need to look systematically together at needs, current resources and gaps before planning service development and/or re-modelling for the following areas of work:

- early intervention to prevent homelessness
- prevention at the point of near crisis
- prevention of repeat homelessness
- assessment processes including how the Common Assessment Framework will be used in the context of homelessness services
- provision of appropriate accommodation and support with clear and flexible pathways towards independence.

Arrangements for monitoring and review of the implementation of strategies are essential and must include clear lines of responsibility and accountability.

The Brighton and Hove Youth Homelessness Strategy

In 2005 the Brighton and Hove Housing Strategy Division began working closely with the Children and Young's People Trust on complementary strategies to prevent children from becoming looked-after. In developing strategies to support family sustainability it became clear that there was a need for:

- a strategic approach to prevent family breakdown, and
- an improvement in the network of solutions available to young people if families did break down, or if respite was needed.

A strategy group was formed of members of Brighton and Hove's Youth Homelessness Working Group (YHWG). They led a three stage process:

1. **a review of youth homelessness** to understand levels of housing need, causes of homelessness and levels of current service provision
2. **engagement and participation** including focus groups with young people, stakeholder events and work with the YHWG
3. **drawing together the strategy** and establishing arrangements for implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

The resulting Youth Homelessness Strategy forms an integral part of the wider homelessness strategy and responds to a key priority of the Children and Young Peoples' Plan. The delivery of the strategy is monitored by the YHWG on behalf of the Brighton and Hove Homelessness and Social Inclusion Steering Group and the Children and Young People Trust Partnership.

The core objectives of the strategy are:

1. intervene early to prevent homelessness
2. provide support to vulnerable young people
3. address the underlying causes of youth homelessness
4. prevent a new generation of rough sleepers
5. provide a wider range of housing options for young people.

Find it at:

www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/index.cfm?request=c1157503

2.5 Effective use of joint resources

There are excellent examples across the country of partners combining resources to deliver jointly funded or commissioned services designed to prevent and tackle homelessness and minimise its damaging effects on children, young people and families.

Government considers that relatively modest investment in prevention initiatives can yield very substantial longer term savings, and in the homelessness context these can start with easily quantified savings from reductions in the use of B&B and temporary accommodation by both Housing Authorities and Children's Services Authorities. The 'invest to save' principle is an important component of the homelessness prevention ethos, and applied creatively it has the potential to release significant resources for positive intervention. Housing Authorities have been advised to develop a formal invest to save strategy for their housing service and a combined approach to this can maximise the potential for savings for both Housing and Children's Services.

Invest to save principles can also be used creatively to resolve problems for individual young people and families that seem intractable in the context of established policies and procedures. Budgets that local authorities commonly use for front line invest to save interventions include Children's Services Authority funds allocated for interventions under section 17 of the Children's Act 1989 and Housing Authority Funds such as homelessness prevention funds and Discretionary Housing Payments. Officers involved in front line invest to save decision-making need to have the discretion to devise creative solutions and to access funds for their implementation.

Joint funding and commissioning are being used across the spectrum of assessment, homelessness prevention, support delivery and accommodation. Examples of agencies and departments who may be involved include:

- Housing Services
- Children's Services
- Youth Offending Teams
- Probation services
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Teams
- Primary Care Trusts
- Teenage Pregnancy Units
- Drugs action teams
- Community Safety Teams

Options include:

- commissioning services from external voluntary or private sector agencies
- jointly funding posts or teams to be employed by one of the partner agencies and work across departmental or organisational boundaries
- combining jointly funded posts, redeployment of resources into partnership services and external commissioning.

Local authorities which have combined resources have told us that the benefits include:

- being able to develop services which have been identified as necessary but which none of the partners can resource alone, for example, supported accommodation for young people with multiple needs
- being able to secure more accommodation options for clients and, therefore, increasing the likelihood of being able to meet their needs and preferences, for example ensuring that:
 - 16 and 17 year olds (including those in care when appropriate), 18 to 21 year old care leavers and other specific groups of young people such as young offenders or teenage parents can all access the full range of supported accommodation in their area
 - families placed in temporary accommodation by Housing or Children's Services Authorities have a wider choice of property type and location to reduce the chances of children having to move schools, and to maintain family links.
- improved inter-agency relationships and understanding through the process of managing and developing the jointly funded services, including breaking down historic barriers between agencies and between housing and children's services authorities in particular
- better multi-agency support for clients
- better accessibility for clients where they can use a range of services in one place
- more expertise and resources within new services, for example pooling housing options and family intervention expertise in jointly resourced family mediation services
- improved consistency and quality control for joint services under unified management arrangements.

Many of these benefits accrue not just from the financial contributions of the partner agencies, but also from the associated increase in management and staff time committed to working together to plan, commission and oversee the services.

Joint commissioners of services working with a fixed number of clients, for example supported accommodation projects, should ensure that arrangements are in place to satisfy each partner that it is receiving value for money for its contribution whilst maximising accessibility and flexibility for the different client groups at the point of need.

Ensuring that services are established on a secure financial footing is important for joint funders as well as agencies commissioned to deliver services. Uncertainty of funding can result in rising staff turnover and dropping service quality, so clear written arrangements for funding, contractual reviews and notice periods for any changes are essential.

Oxfordshire Joint Housing Team

Oxfordshire County Council, the City and District Councils and the Youth Offending Service have established a jointly funded multi-disciplinary **Joint Housing Team (JHT)**. The JHT has been in development since 2006 and was formally launched in December 2007.

The team is managed from within the Children, Young People and Families Directorate of Oxfordshire County Council. It is made up of staff from the Children and Families' Service, the City and District Councils' Housing Options Services and the voluntary sector.

The JHT undertakes assertive homelessness prevention work, joint assessments, support, advice and referral to supported housing for the following groups:

- vulnerable young people (including 16 and 17 year olds, care leavers, teenage parents and young offenders)
- unaccompanied asylum seeking children
- families without recourse to public funds
- intentionally homeless families.

The team is a key vehicle for the achievement of youth homelessness objectives in the Oxfordshire Children and Young Peoples' plan and the city and district Homelessness Strategies. The service is represented at key strategic and operational meetings, including the Supporting People Core Strategy group, the Teenage Pregnancy Implementation Group, Homelessness Strategy Groups and multi-agency meetings that track and plan for the needs of homeless people. The team's implementation plan is embedded in the draft Local Area Agreement action plan to help deliver a reduction in the number of households living in temporary accommodation (national indicator 156).

The JHT plays a key role in leading joint commissioning of services for its client groups and has led the commissioning of a voluntary organisation (BYHP) to provide a supported lodgings service for young people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness including:

- homeless 16 and 17 year olds (including those who are intentionally homeless)
- care leavers approaching 18 whose existing foster carers are willing to become hosts
- 18-21 year olds who are former relevant young people
- 18-25 year olds who are vulnerable and owed a statutory duty.

The Supported Lodgings Co-ordinator is employed by BYHP and focuses on the recruitment, training and support of hosts. Support for the young people is provided by a Housing Support Worker employed by the County Council. Both posts are part of the Joint Housing Team and there are joint management arrangements between the Housing Development Manager (who leads the JHT) and BYHP.

The County and City Councils make equal financial contributions to the supported lodgings service and a Communities and Local Government pump priming grant has enabled the service to be extended from the City of Oxford across the County with contributions from the district councils.

Early benefits from the establishment of the JHT have included:

- better communication and understanding of respective roles and responsibilities leading to a positive transformation in relationships between children's services and housing authorities.
- improved monitoring and management of joint assessments driving improvements in consistency and quality
- sharing the cost of the supported lodgings scheme being crucial to getting it off the ground because none of the partners could commit sufficient resources alone.

During its development phase the JHT has led the achievement of an increase in the number of care leavers in suitable accommodation at the age of 19 from 77 per cent in 2005-06 to 94 per cent in 2007-08. The number of 16 and 17 year olds accepted as having the main homelessness duty owed to them fell from 129 in 2005-06 to 48 in 2007-08, reflecting greatly increased homelessness prevention.

Find more information and guidance, including Better outcomes for children's services through joint funding: a best practice guide at:

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resourcesandpractice/ig00065

Find the Voluntary Sector Compact at:

www.thecompact.org.uk/

and the Code of Good Practice for Funding and Procurement at:

www.thecompact.org.uk/shared_files/GFSR.asp?NodeID=100322

2.6 Sharing information

Information sharing between Housing and Children's Services in the homelessness context should achieve the following:

- safeguard children and young people who may be at risk of significant harm, by immediate notification of concerns to child protection teams and sharing information about the changing whereabouts of children and young people who are considered to be at risk
- identify developing needs early on, providing the tailored support a family needs to prevent the development of a safeguarding issue
- get children and young people with additional or complex needs the services they need to help them achieve the Every Child Matters outcomes
- replace unnecessary repeat assessments with high quality common assessment
- enable planned and co-ordinated family centred intervention by an appropriate range of professionals.

Effective information sharing systems are essential to keeping children and young people safe, but they are only effective if staff have the knowledge and confidence to identify indicators that a child or young person could be at risk and take the appropriate action within local procedures.

In order to achieve this pro-active work is necessary to break down 'silo thinking', promote personal networks and joint working and correct misunderstandings about other disciplines' priorities and methods. The introduction of joint protocols and/or common assessment frameworks has given a number of authorities the opportunity to achieve this through multi-disciplinary training programmes, cross-disciplinary 'shadowing' and co-location of multi-disciplinary teams.

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places a statutory duty on key people and bodies to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and revised statutory guidance on the duty was issued in April 2007. Children's Services Authorities and Housing Authorities must work closely together in recognition of Housing's role as a key partner in safeguarding children and young people who they come into contact with.

Find guidance on Information Sharing at:

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/files/ACB1BA35C20D4C42A1FE6F9133A7C614.pdf

Find more information about ContactPoint, the national database of children currently being implemented by DCSF, at Appendix 8 and at:

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/contactpoint/about/

2.7 Using the Common Assessment Framework

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF), supported by information sharing and the forthcoming arrangements for a national eCAF system and ContactPoint, is one of the key elements in the delivery of integrated front line services. Appendix 8 summarises the CAF.

The CAF is referred to in the statutory guidance supporting section 10 (interagency co-operation) and section 11 (safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children) of the Children Act 2004, to which all local authorities and relevant local partners must have regard. Authorities deciding to depart from it must have clear reasons for doing so.

Find the Statutory Guidance to the Children Act 2004 at:

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/strategy/guidance/

The CAF is a process to help early intervention with children and young people with 'additional needs'. This term is used to describe children at risk of poor outcomes in relation to the five Every Child Matters outcome areas. DCSF estimates that 20-30 per cent of children have additional needs at some point in their childhood and require additional help from education, health, social services and other services. The CAF will help to identify their needs which will in many cases be cross cutting and might include housing needs as well as any of the following:

- disruptive or antisocial behaviour
- overt parental conflict or lack of parental support and/or boundaries
- involvement in or risk of offending
- poor attendance or exclusion from school
- experience of bullying
- disengagement from education, training or employment post 16
- poor nutrition
- ill health
- substance misuse
- anxiety or depression
- pregnancy and parenthood.

Many children and young people under the age of 18 who come to the attention of Housing authorities because they are homeless or threatened with homelessness are likely to have 'additional needs' which should trigger a CAF. This may apply whether the child or young person is part of a family household, single or part of a household with their own child(ren) and /or partner. Children's Services and Housing Services should, therefore, establish arrangements in their areas for ensuring that a CAF assessment is considered for all children and young people who come to the attention of Housing Authorities as homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Find comprehensive resources to support the development of the CAF in local areas including a practitioners' guide, a managers' guide, electronic versions of the forms and staff training materials on the Every Child Matters website:

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/informationsharing/

Find the statutory guidance on working together to safeguard children at:

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/socialcare/safeguarding/workingtogether/

2.8 Involving children, young people and parents

Children, young people and their parents and carers have the greatest interest in, and the most power to change, outcomes for themselves and their families. They know better than anyone the pressures and problems that have contributed to their homelessness. Recent research² showed that 85 per cent of young people who had been accepted as homeless at 16 or 17 had tried to do something to address their housing problem before approaching the council. Young peoples' and families' ideas about the kind of help they need to get back on track, and their views and experiences of needing and using services designed to help, are essential information for professionals aiming to plan and deliver more accessible and high performing services. Services should consider the wider family context, building on families' strengths and ensuring that support is tailored to families' needs.

Parent Consultation in Brighton and Hove

Hove YMCA's service monitoring shows that 60 per cent of young people accessing Hove YMCA's Housing Advice Service cited 'clash of lifestyle' as the main reason for parents no longer being able or willing to accommodate them. In response to this information the YMCA carried out a consultation project with parents of young people aged 16 to 24 who had accessed housing services. Parents were asked about what they felt had caused the homelessness of their children, how family breakdown could have been prevented, their views about the housing options service and their views on other support services.

Parents reported that the main reason for parental eviction leading to homelessness was a breakdown in communication as a result of young peoples' behaviour. Both parents and young people said that conflict often developed following divorce, bereavement or separation of parents. In most cases, family tensions had been building up for a considerable time, exacerbated by a range of other problems such as school exclusion, mental ill health, substance misuse or offending.

Parents spoke about how they often felt excluded from their children's experience of homelessness services following a parental eviction. This exclusion led to a large number of parents experiencing feelings of failure, guilt, and powerlessness.

Parents offered a range of ideas for the types of support services they felt could have helped them prevent family eviction:

- flexible, non-stigmatising family support available before the point of crisis
- parenting courses
- support from other parents
- mediation and counselling.

² Statutory Homelessness in England: The experience of families and 16-17 year olds (see appendix 11)

Parents thought that support services should be available in community settings, be flexible (one to one, telephone, groups, drop-in) and should involve parents as well as young people in their design.

Brighton and Hove's multi-agency Youth Homelessness and Parenting Strategy working groups are now considering how to respond to the findings from the consultation, and the report was featured at the launch of the Brighton and Hove Parenting Strategy.

Find the report of the consultation at www.hoveymca.org.uk

Find resources to help you involve children and young people at:
www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/participation/

Chapter 3

Sixteen and seventeen year olds who are homeless or at risk of homelessness

3.1 Introduction

Children's Services and Housing Services in both unitary and two tier authorities should establish a joint approach, underpinned by a joint protocol, to prevent 16 and 17 year olds in crisis being passed between them unnecessarily and maximise positive outcomes for this client group.

This work should be integrated with Targeted Youth Support arrangements in every area.

No 16 or 17 year old should be placed in Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation by Housing Services or Children's Services, except in an emergency, where B&B accommodation is the only available alternative to rooflessness. In these exceptional cases, B&B accommodation should be used for the shortest time possible and support must be offered to the young person during their stay.

Housing Services and Children's Services are expected to adopt a shared strategic approach to the provision of emergency accommodation and housing and support pathways for young people in order to eradicate the use of B&B accommodation.

3.2 Risks to homeless 16 and 17 year olds

Dislocation from the family and local community can lead to additional levels of vulnerability for young people who are already at risk. The risks identified for homeless 16 and 17 year olds are:

Risk to health

- increased emotional distress and mental health problems
- estrangement or isolation from family and friends leading to reduced emotional support
- substance misuse, including smoking and alcohol
- poor diet due to living outside the family on a low income
- increased sexual activity bringing the risk of pregnancy and of infections.

Risks to safety

- inappropriate accommodation such as B&B
- being drawn into prostitution and sexual exploitation
- involvement in anti-social behaviour or offending
- failed accommodation placements or tenancies leading to 'intentional homelessness' decisions and exclusion by supported accommodation providers and landlords
- there is emerging anecdotal evidence of increased risk to young people in temporary accommodation, especially B&B, of being targeted for recruitment into gangs in areas where they are active.

Risks to enjoyment and achievement

- dropping out of, or being less likely to take up, education, training or employment
- no longer participating in pastimes such as sporting and creative activities
- losing touch with friends and social networks.

Risks to economic well being

- financial stress and poverty
- long term poverty and social exclusion when education, training or employment is disrupted.

3.3 Desired outcomes of joint working

The main **outcomes of joint working** to prevent and tackle homelessness should be:

- **Young people remaining in, or returning to, the family home** unless it would be unsafe or inappropriate for them to do so
- **Improved relationships with their families**, whether or not they can live at home
- Clear and **flexible accommodation and support pathways** towards independent living for those who need them
- A **personalised support package** for every young person, based on a full assessment of their needs across all five Every Child Matters outcome areas, and involving all appropriate agencies, to help them achieve their aspirations and make a positive transition to adulthood. This should include support to maintain or return to their **learning or work**.

3.4 Joint working checklist

Your joint approach should establish the following:

	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
A partnership of key agencies including those responsible for: Children's services; housing; supporting people; youth offending; Connexions, education services, voluntary sector provision; health services including sexual health/teenage pregnancy, mental health and substance misuse; and parenting.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mechanisms for involving young people and parents in the work of the partnership including strategy and service design.	<input type="checkbox"/>
A shared written strategy for preventing and tackling homelessness for young people (not just 16 and 17 year olds) and securing their access to the services they need.	<input type="checkbox"/>
A range of supported accommodation options, jointly procured where appropriate, for young people who cannot live at home, offering clear but flexible pathways towards independence. This should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • suitable emergency accommodation such as Nightstop, Crashpad or young people's direct access accommodation • supported lodgings • building-based supported accommodation including foyers • move-on protocols from supported accommodation • floating support • provision for young people with multiple needs. 	<input type="checkbox"/>
Early intervention with children and young people who are identified as being at risk, including the risk of homelessness, as part of Targeted Youth Support.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education work about homelessness, including peer education, in schools and alternatives to school such as Pupil Referral Units. This should be targeted to reach young people who are most likely to be at risk of homelessness.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Same day access to an initial assessment, preventative intervention and, where necessary, suitable emergency accommodation. Systems should eliminate the risk of young people being passed between Housing and Children's Services unnecessarily.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use of a common assessment process when young people seek help because they consider they are at risk of homelessness, using the Common Assessment Framework.	<input type="checkbox"/>

<p>An integrated and holistic response to young people based on the assessment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For young people who are in education, training or work this must include support to maintain it (or take an agreed break) through the period of crisis. • Young people who are not in education, training or employment should be supported to re-engage with learning and work. 	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Family mediation and support to keep young people at home where possible and appropriate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This should be planned and commissioned in the context of the local authority parenting strategy • Consider the scope for links between YOT parenting and family support plans and intervention and homelessness prevention interventions. 	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Continued work with families where young people move out to help facilitate potential moves home at a later date if safe/appropriate</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Protocols for planned access to accommodation and support for young people who would otherwise face homelessness on release from custodial institutions.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Clear agreed pathways into other services including Connexions, further education and training providers, CAMHS, substance misuse services and teenage pregnancy services.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Hull Young Peoples' Support Service (YPSS)

The Young People's Support Service (YPSS) was set up in 1999 with the aim of providing an integrated, partnership based service to young people in need and young people leaving care. The partnership is led by the Children's and Young People's Service and involves Connexions, the Housing Service and the Primary Care Trust.

The YPSS provides the leaving care service and assessment, advice and support on behalf of the local authority and Connexions to any young person in need aged 13-21.

The YPSS and Supporting People worked together to develop the young people's elements of the Supporting People Strategy, and supporting people and leaving care funds are used to jointly commission all supported accommodation for young people in the city.

The YPSS is based in a city centre shopping street. A range of specialist staff work there giving young people access to help with:

- housing and homelessness
- personal finance and welfare rights
- education, training and employment
- emotional and physical health issues including counselling
- substance misuse
- asylum and refugee issues
- sports and leisure opportunities .

The Youth Offending Team's Accommodation Officer is based in the YPSS to ensure that YOT clients, including young people leaving custody, have timely access to preventative services and housing options.

The YPSS uses the Common Assessment Framework's initial assessment tool when a young person first comes in to the service, and all young people in need have their details recorded on the Children's and Young People's Services Care First database.

If there is reason to believe a young person may be homeless they see the Housing Options officer who gathers any additional information needed and assesses whether a duty may be owed under the homelessness legislation. During this process they will work with the assessment and support team to:

- prevent homelessness through mediation and support
- provide advice on a range of housing options
- secure suitable emergency and longer term supported accommodation if required
- support the young person to register and bid for social housing.

Young people are involved in the development and running of the YPSS in a range of ways. For example, an interview by a panel of young people forms part of the recruitment process for all new staff, and the service uses 'sixty second surveys' to consult young people on a range of issues.

The YPSS is achieving a range of positive outcomes with young people. For example, an evaluation of the services' supported lodging scheme at the beginning of 2008 showed that 98 per cent of young people using it were in education, training or employment. Only 3 care leavers were accepted as homeless in Hull, which has an average of 50 young people leaving care each year, during 2007-08 and 97 per cent of 19 year old care leavers were in suitable accommodation.

3.5 Useful Resources

Practice Guidance and Resources

The National Youth Homelessness Scheme website is a comprehensive knowledge base covering being strategic, early intervention and homelessness prevention, accommodation provision and wider needs

www.communities.gov.uk/youthhomelessness

Parenting Support: Guidance for Local Authorities in England (DFES, 2006)

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/files/230790E404393C411AFBEF46E7D2E490.pdf

Every Child Matters

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk

Targeted Youth Support

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/targetedyouthsupport/

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/tysemergingpractice/

Common Assessment Framework

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/caf

Suitable, Sustainable, Supported: A strategy to ensure provision of accommodation for children and young people who offend (YJB, 2006)

www.yjb.gov.uk/Publications/Scripts/prodView.asp?idproduct=307&eP=

Research

Statutory Homelessness in England: The experience of families and 16-17 year olds (Communities and Local Government, 2008)

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/experienceoffamilies

Accommodation needs and experiences of young people who offend (YJB, 2007)

www.yjb.gov.uk/Publications/Scripts/prodView.asp?idproduct=329&eP=

Youth Homelessness in the UK: A Decade of Progress? (Quilgars D, Johnsen S and Pleace N (Centrepont and University of York, 2008)

www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings

Chapter 4

Care Leavers aged 18 to 21

4.1 Introduction

Around 6,000 young people leave care in England each year and will need support to help them move on to settled accommodation and settled lives. A minority are likely to experience difficulties as they establish a settled life; some may experience homelessness or threat of homelessness. The Government is committed to increasing the proportion of care leavers in suitable accommodation through the implementation of PSA 16.

Local authorities have a range of statutory duties towards looked after children and young people. They must accommodate and maintain all looked after children and every looked after child (who include "eligible" care leavers – see Appendix 3) must have a care plan (which becomes the pathway plan at age 16+) which sets out how they intend to respond to the full range of the child's needs. Children's Services Authorities are also required under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and regulations to work with young people preparing to leave care to keep in touch; to maintain the pathway plan and keep it under regular review; and to appoint a personal adviser.

As young people mature their support will involve preparing them for greater independence. As they prepare to move on from their final care placement³ the pathway planning process should be used to ensure that they move on to suitable accommodation in a planned way, with the support they need.

The Children's Services Authority will need to call on assistance from its partner agencies to enable it to discharge its "corporate parenting" responsibilities effectively. It will be essential that Children's Services and Housing Services in both unitary and two tier authorities establish joint working arrangements for promoting and planning care leavers' transition to adulthood so that young people can be provided with the support they need to manage the challenges of independent living.

³The White Paper *Care Matters: Time for Change* – sets out a range of proposals to prevent children from being made to leave care placements until they are properly prepared and ready. www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/timeforchange/

There will be a continuing need for support to ensure that care leavers are able to maintain their accommodation. Even with this support a small minority of young people will experience problems that lead to a risk of homelessness. Housing and Children's Services should have a joint protocol in place to ensure a quick, safe and supportive response to these young people.

4.2 Risks to young people leaving care aged 18-21

Many young people leaving care have multiple needs and are at risk of poor long term outcomes. Becoming homeless is one of the top ten concerns of young people leaving care⁴. Significant risks for care leavers faced with homelessness include:

Risks to health

- increased emotional distress and mental health problems
- social isolation exacerbating anxiety and stress
- substance misuse, including smoking and alcohol
- increased sexual activity bringing the risk of pregnancy and of infections.

Risks to safety

- inappropriate accommodation such as Bed and Breakfast hotels
- returning to a situation of potential risk of harm with a parent/family member due to homelessness
- failed accommodation placements or tenancies leading to future intentional homelessness decisions and exclusion by landlords
- involvement in anti-social behaviour or offending
- being drawn into prostitution and sexual exploitation.

Risks to enjoyment and achievement

- dropping out of, or being less likely to take up, education, training or employment
- no longer participating in pastimes such as sporting and creative activities
- losing touch with foster carers, parents, extended family, friends and social networks.

Risks to economic well being

- long term poverty and social exclusion when education, training or employment is disrupted.

⁴ Young People's Views on Leaving Care – report of the Children's Rights Director (CSCI 2006)

4.3 Desired outcomes of joint working

The main **outcomes of joint working** should be:

- **Planned moves towards independence**, using clear and flexible accommodation and support pathways, for every care leaver
- Maintained or developed **family support** where safe and appropriate
- **Ongoing support** to ensure they are able to maintain their accommodation and early intervention if things start to go wrong
- A **personalised support package**, based on a full assessment of their wider needs and involving all appropriate agencies, to help them achieve their aspirations and make a positive transition to adulthood – including maintenance of, or return to, their **learning or work**
- **Access to safe, secure and appropriate emergency accommodation** if, exceptionally, accommodation arrangements do break down, followed by quick re-entry into housing and support pathways.

4.4 Joint working checklist

Your joint approach should establish the following:

	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
A shared commitment from Children's Services and Housing Services regarding a corporate parenting approach for 18 – 21 year old care leavers.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Planning for the accommodation and support needs of care leavers as part of youth homelessness strategy development, including the use of Children's Services data on numbers of young people due to leave care over the life of the strategy.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clear roles and responsibilities for across the transition from care including the use of a lead professional role where appropriate.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Care leaver access to the full range of young peoples' supported accommodation options in the area.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pathway planning systems that anticipate accommodation needs. They should engage each young person, their personal adviser and housing options staff regarding suitable housing and any additional support needed, so that the necessary arrangements are in place at the point where the young person is ready to leave their care placement.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arrangements to offer care leavers in need of social housing reasonable preference on welfare grounds through local authority allocations schemes.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contingency planning arrangements for when placements are at risk or break down, led by personal advisers working with accommodation providers, housing options teams and other support services.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arrangements for responding to the immediate and ongoing needs of care leavers from other responsible authorities who may face homelessness and seek housing assistance.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensuring smooth transitions into adult services where needed, such as adult social care, adult mental health services, substance misuse services and the Probation Service.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Birmingham Leaving Care Service

Following an independent review of the Birmingham Leaving Care Service in 2006 an improvement plan was put in place. One of the key actions was to improve accommodation pathways, processes and information, advice and guidance for care leavers. As a result St Basils was commissioned to deliver an Accommodation Pathways Service (APS) to young people leaving care. The objective was to improve planning for the accommodation needs of young people leaving care, thereby reducing the use of inappropriate accommodation placements including B&B and preventing homelessness.

The key aspect of the new approach was to use partnership to bring housing expertise to accommodation planning for young people leaving care. St Basils were already providing the Home Options service for all young people aged 16 to 25 on behalf of the City Council, and had developed a successful APS with the Youth Offending Team.

A St Basils worker who is co-located in the leaving care team delivers the APS. Young people are referred by their Personal Adviser well in advance, usually three months, of their planned move from their last care placement. St Basils then works with the young person and their personal adviser to secure appropriate accommodation. St Basils has close links with all providers of accommodation and support for young people in the city. Options include the conversion of foster care placements into 18+ (supported lodgings) placements.

Personal Advisers will also refer young people whose accommodation is at risk and St Basils works with the young person and their personal adviser to prevent placement breakdown or help secure alternative accommodation and plan new accommodation pathways.

When young people are approaching readiness for their own tenancy they are referred to the Council's Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Unit who manage the allocation of accommodation and, where necessary, floating support for the young person.

Monthly pathways meetings involving the Leaving Care Team's area managers, Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Unit and St Basils are used to monitor progress with regard to planned moves, plan action for young people whose placement may be at risk and monitor progress in accessing more appropriate placements for any young people staying in B&B or other unacceptable accommodation.

When the APS was established its first priority was to secure appropriate accommodation for nine care leavers who were living in bed and breakfast and this was achieved for seven of the young people within the first three months of the APS being established. The APS also assisted the Leaving Care service to move 28 young people on from other inappropriate housing. The use of bed and breakfast accommodation for care leavers has reduced by 42 per cent since the service was established and is continuing to fall.

This is seen as a significant achievement for integrated working and planning ahead. It has proved to be cost effective and improved the accommodation choices for young people.

4.5 Useful Resources

The National Youth Homelessness Scheme website is a comprehensive knowledge base covering strategic planning, early intervention and prevention, accommodation provision and wider needs

www.communities.gov.uk/youthhomelessness

Guidance on the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 . Chapter five covers needs assessment and pathway planning

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/socialcare/childrenincare/leavingcare/

Allocation of Accommodation Code of Guidance for Local Housing Authorities (2002)

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/allocationaccommodationcode

Care Matters: Time for Change

www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/timeforchange/

National Protocol for Inter-authority Arrangements for Care Leavers

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/files/National%20Protocol%20Final%20Revision.doc

Care Leaving Strategies – a good practice handbook (2002)

www.dfes.gov.uk/qualityprotects/pdfs/care_strategies.pdf

Home Alone

www.raineronline.org/gen/m7_policy.aspx

Young Peoples' Views on Leaving Care – Report of the Children's Rights Director (2006)

www.rights4me.org/reportView.cfm?id=6

Socially Excluded Adults PSA

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/psa.aspx

National Leaving Care Advisory Service (NLCAS)

www.leavingcare.org

Chapter 5

Children of families living in temporary accommodation

5.1 Introduction

Housing authorities have a range of duties to secure accommodation for people who are or may be, homeless. The majority of people helped in this way are families with children. If a family has become homeless through no fault of their own (and they are eligible for assistance) the authority must secure suitable temporary accommodation until a suitable settled home becomes available. However, if the authority consider that the family brought homelessness on themselves (made themselves 'homeless intentionally') the duty to secure accommodation is for just long enough to give the family a reasonable opportunity to find accommodation for themselves. Authorities also have an interim duty to secure accommodation for a family with children while they make their inquiries, if they have reason to believe the family may be homeless.

Children's Services Authorities also have the power to arrange temporary accommodation in order to offer assistance, under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, to children who need to be accommodated with their family (see Appendix 3). If a Children's Services Authority offers support to children and their families by arranging for them to take up temporary accommodation, then the children involved must remain subject to a "child in need" plan throughout the intervention⁵.

When placing families in temporary accommodation, Children's Services should work closely with Housing Authorities to ensure that the accommodation is suitable for the family and that move-on to settled accommodation is arranged as quickly as possible.

5.2 Risks to children living in temporary accommodation

Key **risks** facing children living in families in temporary accommodation include:

Risks to Health

- Increased emotional distress and mental health problems
- Reduced access to health and other services they need
- Behavioural problems.

⁵ www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/socialcare/integratedchildrenssystem/resources/exemplars/?asset=document&id=33976

Risks to safety

- Being 'lost' to key services
- Separation from friends and other family members.

Risks to enjoyment and achievement

- Disruption and uncertainty affecting all areas of life
- Missing school and lower educational achievement
- No longer participating in pastimes such as sporting and creative activities.

Risks to economic wellbeing

- Disruption and under-achievement at school can have long term impact on future employment pathways and income
- Expensive temporary accommodation removing incentives to work, trapping families in unemployment and cementing a cycle of poverty and worklessness.

5.3 Desired outcomes of joint working

The main **outcomes of joint working** should be:

- **Reduced use of temporary accommodation** by housing and children's services through better homelessness prevention
- Provision of **better quality and range of temporary accommodation** enabling better fit with family needs
- **Minimised disruption to children** and their families including continuity in children's education
- **Early identification** of children and families at risk
- **Holistic assessment and joined up packages of support**, tailored to a family's needs
- Better **safeguarding** of children.

5.4 Joint working checklist

Your joint approach should establish the following:

	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Collaboration in the procurement and management of temporary accommodation to deliver: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better use of resources and expertise in procurement and management • Greater economies of scale in procurement • Shared access to a wider range of property types and locations, increasing opportunities to place families near to the children's schools and other essential services and support networks. 	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assessment of all children who may have additional needs using the Common Assessment Framework	<input type="checkbox"/>
Holistic, family centred support to address needs identified through assessment and minimise disruption to children's education, other activities and access to services	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information sharing using integrated systems such as ContactPoint (see Appendix 9) and NOTIFY (for London Boroughs – see Appendix 10) to keep key agencies informed of the whereabouts of children in families in temporary accommodation.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Support to families in temporary accommodation in Leicester

Leicester City Council's services for families with children in temporary accommodation have a dual focus on building capacity to prevent cyclical homelessness and meeting children's needs. Border House provides supported hostel-based temporary accommodation, and all families entering TA either stay there or receive outreach assessment and support services from the Family Support Service (FSS) based there. The service is primarily funded through Supporting People.

Assessment covers all members of the household. Children who may have additional needs are assessed by the FSS using the CAF, and arrangements are in place with the Children and Young Peoples' Service for CAF recording and information sharing. Case conferences are used when a family needs multi-agency intervention.

When the initial assessment highlights the need for a 'Child in Need' assessment a protocol with the Children and Young People's Service guarantees an immediate response.

Support is delivered by the FSS in partnership with other key agencies in line with the support plan. The FSS has staff working with the adults in the family to build their skills and capacity to avoid repeat homelessness as well as child development specialists who focus on parenting support and child development. When families who move into secure accommodation still need support they are referred to the Council's floating support service.

There is a clear focus on maximising continuity of access to mainstream services, underpinned by protocols such as an agreement for the provision of new school places or transport to previous schools within a maximum of 10 days (although usually immediate) of a family moving to temporary accommodation in a different area. The identification of high levels of mental health need families who have been accepted as homeless has led to the development of a protocol with the PCT to ensure access to mental health services within a week and a CAMHS assessment within 10 days of referral by the FSS.

The FSS has had a dramatic impact on repeat homelessness. During 2000-01, before the service was established, 96 of the families who used Border House had stayed there before, 38 of whom stayed four or more times. In 2007-08 only five families had ever used the service before.

5.5 Useful Resources

Common Assessment Framework

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/caf

Contact Point

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/contactpoint/

NOTIFY

www.notifylondon.gov.uk

Guidance on Accommodating Children in Need and their families (LAC (2003)13)

www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Lettersandcirculars/LocalAuthorityCirculars/AllLocalAuthority/DH_4003946

Chapter 6

Children of families who have been, or are at risk of being, found intentionally homeless by a housing authority

6.1 Introduction

Parents of families that become intentionally homeless often experience financial stress, multiple debts and/or some level of vulnerability. Anti-social behaviour or rent arrears can lead to eviction and a decision of intentional homelessness by the local authority. The needs of the family may be complex before they become homeless and are likely to increase as a result of becoming homeless.

Under the homelessness legislation, the significance of a family with children being found *intentionally* homeless is that the housing authority's duty is limited to securing accommodation for long enough to give the household a reasonable opportunity to find their own accommodation and ensuring that advice and assistance is provided to help them in their efforts to find accommodation.

Many intentionally homeless families experience periods in temporary accommodation and those authorities considering developing joint approaches to work with families who are intentionally homeless or at risk of intentional homelessness should also read Chapter 5.

It is important that housing services refer families with multiple needs into a system of joined up support.

6.2 Risks to children living in families who are intentionally homeless or at risk of intentional homelessness

Key risks facing children living in intentionally homeless households, in addition to those associated with living in temporary accommodation (see page 32), include the following. These risks are likely to affect children across all five every child matters outcomes areas:

- failure to address the root causes of the loss of the home leading to repeat homelessness and further disruption
- failure to access suitable housing in the private rented sector
- potential for children to be taken into the looked after system if the family does not find suitable accommodation.

6.3 Desired outcomes of joint working

The main outcomes of joint working should be:

- **Earlier identification** of families with children at risk of becoming homeless including intentional homelessness
- **Earlier intervention to prevent homelessness** and meet the wider needs of families and children, regardless of whether their threatened homelessness may be intentional
- **Minimised disruption to children** and their families including continuity in children's education
- **Ongoing support** for families who need it, helping to prevent the repeated threat of homelessness and improve overall outcomes for children and families.
- **Children are never taken into the care of the local authority for the sole reason that their family is homeless.**

6.4 Joint working checklist

Your joint approach should establish the following:

	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Shared planning of, and access to, homelessness prevention interventions to ensure that they are swiftly available and responsive to any family with children who may be at risk of homelessness. This should apply whichever service they initially have contact with and whether or not threatened homelessness may be intentional.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Where persistent anti-social behaviour is a cause of intentional homelessness for some families, consideration of the development of a Family Intervention Project (See Appendix 11).	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arrangements for housing options teams to inform children's services as soon as they know an intentional homelessness decision is possible, when the decision is made and the outcome of interventions to help the family secure suitable accommodation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agreed contingency arrangements for families towards whom the homelessness duty is discharged and access to temporary accommodation under the homelessness legislation ended before alternative accommodation has been secured.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shared planning of, and co-ordinated access to, arrangements to help families secure private rented accommodation such as accredited landlord schemes, bond and/or rent deposit guarantee schemes and specific agreements with landlords on rent levels and accommodation standards.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Intensive support to enable the most vulnerable families to access services designed to help them secure private rented accommodation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ongoing support and work with private and social landlords to prevent repeat homelessness.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Brighton and Hove – seamless services to intentionally homeless families

Brighton and Hove Council's Housing Needs Service commissions and manages temporary accommodation under a service level agreement with social service teams. This includes the Children and Young Peoples' Trust (CYPT) as well as the Physical Disabilities, Mental Health and Learning Disabilities Teams.

For homeless families this enables a much more seamless service. A social worker, funded by the CYPT, is based in the Housing Needs Service and works with housing options staff to deliver a joined up assessment process. Where a family may be at risk of being found to have become homeless intentionally the social worker and housing options service work together to find an accommodation solution, with the departments often sharing any associated costs.

Where a family has been provided with interim accommodation pending inquiries into their circumstances, and it has not been possible to arrange an alternative accommodation solution before the family is found to be intentionally homeless by the housing authority, the family is allowed to remain in the temporary accommodation once the homelessness duty has ended. The Housing Needs service charges the cost to the CYPT from the end of the homelessness duty.

The social worker, who will have had contact with the family since they initially applied for housing assistance, takes over their case fully and continues to work with them to secure private rented accommodation with the assistance of the Bond Scheme run by the Housing Options Service.

This significantly reduces disruption to the children and the family.

District of Easington Council's Vulnerable Person Protocol

Easington District Council's Homelessness & Housing Advice Service led the development of this protocol in order to help households sustain their accommodation and build their capacity to maintain it in the future.

The protocol is used for households who are assessed as having support needs which demand a multi-agency response. Any household who may be at risk of losing their accommodation is eligible and many of the households supported through the protocol are at risk of intentional homelessness.

The Homelessness & Housing Advice Team calls a protocol meeting involving agencies currently involved with the family and those whose intervention has been identified as necessary during the assessment process. This will include Children's Services if there are children in the family. A multi-agency plan of support is agreed at the meeting and follow up meetings used to review progress.

After the support plan has been implemented the protocol process can be re-established in response to contact from the household, the landlord or any of the agencies involved if further problems begin to arise.

Ninety per cent of the households supported through the protocol during 2007/08 were placed in suitable accommodation with ongoing support and monitoring. In addition the protocol has led to much improved working relationships between the Homelessness & Housing Advice Team and Social Services teams.

The protocol is part of a package of measures aimed at strengthening the prevention and housing options service. Other interventions include a bond scheme, investment in developing relationships with private landlords and RSLs and a homelessness prevention fund. Social services and housing share the cost of preventative interventions for some families.

This package of measures has been in place since the April 2007 and has led to a 63 per cent increase in the number of households for whom homelessness was prevented with caseworker intervention in 2007-08 compared with 2006-07.

6.5 Useful Resources

Homelessness Prevention: A guide to good practice (Communities and Local Government 2006)

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/homelessnessprevention

Preventing Homelessness: A Strategy Health Check (Communities and Local Government 2006)

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/preventinghomelessness

Family Intervention Projects, including the FIP toolkit and information about the effectiveness of the FIP model

www.respect.gov.uk/members/article.aspx?id=8678&terms=family+intervention+projects

Think Family: Improving the Life Chance of Families at Risk

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/families_at_risk.aspx

Appendix 1

The statutory framework for joint working

Legislation	Requirement
Housing Act 1996 Section 213	Where a local housing authority seeks co-operation from another housing authority or body, including a social services authority, to help discharge a homelessness function under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, the authority to whom the request is made has a duty to co-operate so far as is reasonable in the circumstances.
Housing Act 1996 Section 213A	Where a housing authority has reason to believe that an applicant with whom a person under the age of 18 normally resides, or might reasonably be expected to reside, may be ineligible for assistance or found to be homeless (or threatened with homelessness) intentionally, the authority must ensure that the applicant is invited to consent to the essential facts of the case being notified to the social services authority.
Local Government Act 2000 Section 2	This provision gives local authorities substantial capacity for cross boundary partnership working with other authorities and partners such as the health and social services sectors.
Homelessness Act 2002 Section 1	Local authorities must publish a homelessness strategy at least every five years and strategies must be based on a review of homelessness in the district. The social services authority must give such assistance as the housing authority may reasonably require. Both the housing authority and the social services authority must take the homelessness strategy into account in the exercise of their functions.
Homelessness Act 2002 Section 3(2) Section 3(5)	Homelessness strategies may include specific objectives and action to be taken forward through the exercise of the functions of the housing authority and the social services authority. When formulating a homelessness strategy local housing authorities must consider the extent to which its objectives can be achieved through joint action with other bodies.

Legislation	Requirement
Children Act 1989 Section 27	A social services authority can ask a range of other statutory authorities, including a housing authority, to assist them in the exercise of their functions in relation to children in need and looked after children under Part 3 of the Children Act. The other statutory authority must comply to the extent that the request is compatible with their own statutory duties and other obligations and would not unduly prejudice the discharge of their own functions.
Children Act 2004	<p>The (top tier) local authority is required to make arrangements to promote co-operation to improve outcomes; relevant partners, including the district council, are required to co-operate with those arrangements. This is the legislative underpinning of the Children's Trust and includes a power to pool budgets and other resources.</p> <p>Improved outcomes for children under <i>Every Child Matters</i> are to be delivered through Children's Trusts which comprise: integrated front line delivery such as multi-agency working; integrated processes such as the Common Assessment Framework; integrated strategy with joint planning and commissioning; and inter agency governance arrangements. It also requires the establishment of Local Safeguarding Children Boards and makes provision for information sharing.</p> <p>The Act establishes the Director of Children's Services as a statutory post to integrate education and children's social services functions within the local authority and, together with the equivalent political post of Lead Member for Children's Services, champion the interests of Children and young people across all services and take the lead in building local partnership arrangements to improve the wellbeing of children in the authority's area (the Children's Trust).</p>
National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990	Social services authorities are required to carry out an assessment of any person in need of community care services. Social services are required under s 47 to notify the housing authority if there appears to be housing need when the assessment is carried out.

Appendix 2

Evidence of the need for better joint working

The risks associated with poor joint working and the benefits of collaboration are well documented, embedded in Government policy and understood by many professionals.

Although there have been significant improvements we still have a long way to go. Evidence of failure to organise services around children, families and young people continues to be uncovered, as the following examples show.

The **Laming Inquiry** (2002) into the death of Victoria Climbié reported that children are at higher risk of being lost to services, including child protection and support services, because of mobility and disconnection to mainstream services caused when their family becomes homeless. Poor inter-agency working was clearly a contributory factor in the failure to protect Victoria. Laming makes it clear that the "safeguarding of children will continue to depend upon services such as health, education, housing, police and social services working together".

Find the report at:

www.victoria-climbié-inquiry.org.uk/

The Social Exclusion Unit's **Frequent Movers project** (2006) highlighted significant problems of basic information sharing among agencies including housing and social services departments.

Find Moving On: Reconnecting Frequent Movers at:

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/~media/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/publications_1997_to_2006/moving_frequent%20pdf.ashx

The DCSF and Government Office London's **London Child Mobility Project** (2006) recommends that all London Boroughs should be encouraged to build links between their Children's Trusts arrangements and housing services and planning, including a focus on strengthening housing's role in safeguarding children and young people.

Find the report at:

www.younglondonmatters.org/uploads/documents/mobilityreport_427127.pdf

The Social Exclusion Unit's report **Transitions: Young Adults with Complex Needs** (2005) noted that a young person presenting for advice and assistance with housing is rarely assessed holistically and few housing departments see it as part of their role to signpost young people onto other help they may need that does not seem to relate directly to their housing need. Forty three per cent of young people responding to the SEU's 2005 Young Adults Questionnaire stated that the reason they had first got in touch with services was due to housing need or homelessness.

Find the report at:

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/~media/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/publications_1997_to_2006/transitions_young_adults%20pdf.ashx

In February 2008 the Law Lords ruled on the case of **M vs Hammersmith and Fulham**. M's family spent many years in unsettled and temporary accommodation. She was excluded from school at the age of 14 and never returned, and at 16 became involved with the criminal justice system. The ruling strongly emphasised the importance of joint protocols between housing and children's services and of housing departments making a referral to Children's Services if they have reason to believe a young person they are working with may be a child in need.

Find the full judgement at:

www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKHL/2008/14.html

Appendix 3

Statutory responsibilities and powers by client group

Homeless 16 and 17 year olds

Under the homelessness legislation (Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996), all 16 and 17 year olds have a priority need for accommodation – except “relevant children” (care leavers aged 16-17) or children in need owed a duty under s20 of the Children Act 1989. This means that a housing authority must secure suitable accommodation for them if they are eligible for assistance and have become homeless through no fault of their own.

The Children Act 1989 places a duty on children's services authorities to provide accommodation for a child in need aged 16 or over whose welfare is likely to be seriously prejudiced if they do not provide accommodation; and to provide accommodation for a care leaver aged 16- 17 years (known as a “relevant child”) unless they are satisfied that his welfare does not require it.

Care Leavers

All looked after children must have a ‘care plan’. This is a formal document setting out how the local authority intends to meet the full range of the child's needs. Young people, their parents, carers and other agencies must be involved in the process of assessing the child's needs and thereby contributing to the care planning process.

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and related Regulations sets out the statutory requirements for planning for young people being prepared to leave care. This builds on the care planning framework outlined above. Following assessment, each young person must be provided with a pathway plan, based on their existing care plan, which sets out the services needed to successfully support a young person's transition to adulthood. This plan must be kept under regular review. Young people should be central to discussions about plans for their future and it should be exceptional for plans to be made without consulting them.

Regulations⁶ specify the dimensions of need that must be considered as part of the pathway planning process for each individual care leaver. Any plan must include information about the following:

Needs	Interpretation Schedule 1 Children (LC)(England) Regs. 2001
Health and Development	Health needs, including mental health needs, and how they are to be met.
Education, training and employment	Detailed plan for education, training or employment. Based on Personal Education Plan (PEP) and young person's realistic ambitions and aspirations. How the local authority will assist the child in relation to employment or other purposeful activity or regulations.
Support from family and other relationships	Support to enable the young person to develop and sustain appropriate family and social relationships (could include support to maintain contact with former foster carers).
Financial needs	Financial support to be provided – in particular support for accommodation or maintenance.
Practical and other skills necessary for independent living.	How local authority and other services will assist the young person to develop the skills they will need to manage “independent living”.
Emotional and Behavioural Development	
Needs for care, support and accommodation	Details of accommodation the young person is to occupy and any support to be offered linked to this.

Children's Services Authorities must appoint or continue the appointment of a Personal Adviser and keep the Pathway Plan under review for care leavers who are over 18 until they complete their agreed programme of education and training or until age 21, which ever is the later. They also have a duty to provide assistance, including assistance with accommodation, to the extent that a young person's welfare requires it. Section 24B(3) of the 1989 Act, as amended by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 also imposes a duty on authorities responsible for supporting individual care leavers to provide vacation accommodation or the means to secure this for care leavers attending full-time courses, if they are under 24 years.

⁶ Children (Leaving Care) (England) Regulations 2001 – reg. (7)

Under the homelessness legislation (Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996) care leavers aged 18 to 21 have a priority need for accommodation. This means that a housing authority must secure suitable accommodation for them if they are eligible for assistance and have become homeless through no fault of their own.

Adults aged 21 or over who are vulnerable as a result of having been looked after, accommodated or fostered also have a priority need for accommodation under the homelessness legislation.

The table below sets out the statutory framework for housing support for care leavers. [Note: in unitary authorities children's services and housing services statutory functions will be placed on the same authority]

Housing support for care leavers : the statutory framework		
Status of care leaver	Statutory obligations: Children's Services <i>Children Act 1989 as amended by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.</i>	Statutory obligations : Housing Authorities <i>Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation)(England) Order 2002.</i>
Relevant children Children aged 16 and 17 who have left care (and who have been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and have been looked after at some time while 16 or 17).	These include: A duty to safeguard and promote the child's welfare and, unless they are satisfied that his welfare does not require it, support him by maintaining him and providing him with or maintaining him in suitable accommodation. A duty to appoint a Personal Adviser and prepare a Pathway Plan (based on an assessment of needs).	No duty to secure accommodation (Relevant children do not have priority need for the purpose of the homelessness legislation).

Housing support for care leavers : the statutory framework		
Status of care leaver	Statutory obligations: Children's Services <i>Children Act 1989 as amended by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.</i>	Statutory obligations : Housing Authorities <i>Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation)(England) Order 2002.</i>
"Eligible Child" An "eligible child" is a young person aged 16+ who has been looked after for the prescribed period (13 weeks) and is then eligible for services under the Children(Leaving Care) Act and who remains looked after by the local authority.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To fulfil all their duties towards the child that they have to every looked after child. • To assess their needs and maintain the care plan (which becomes their pathway plan from age 16) • To appoint a personal adviser • The care/pathway plan to be kept under review; reviews must be chaired by the Independent Reviewing officer (IRO) 	
Former relevant children Young people aged 18-21 who have left care (i.e. they have been either an 'eligible child' or a 'relevant child' or both)	Duty to continue the appointment of a Personal Adviser and keep the Pathway Plan under review. Duty to provide assistance, including assistance with accommodation, to the extent that his welfare requires it.	For those aged 18-21 – a duty to secure accommodation if they become homeless through no fault of their own. For those aged 21, a duty to secure accommodation if they become homeless through no fault of their own and they are vulnerable as a result of having been in care.

Housing support for care leavers : the statutory framework		
Status of care leaver	Statutory obligations: Children's Services <i>Children Act 1989 as amended by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.</i>	Statutory obligations : Housing Authorities <i>Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation)(England) Order 2002.</i>
Young people over the age of 21 who have left care (i.e. they have been either an 'eligible child' or a 'relevant child' or both).	A former relevant child who is still pursuing a course of education or training in accordance with his pathway plan is entitled to continuing assistance until he completes or abandons his education or training.	Duty to secure accommodation if they become homeless through no fault of their own and they are vulnerable as a result of having been in care. (NB. there is a statutory test of 'vulnerability', established in case law).

Intentionally homeless families

A person becomes homeless, or threatened with homelessness, intentionally if:

- i. he or she deliberately does or fails to do anything in consequence of which he or she ceases to occupy accommodation (or the likely result of which is that he or she will be forced to leave accommodation)
- ii. the accommodation is available for his or her occupation, and
- iii. it would have been reasonable for him or her to continue to occupy the accommodation.

An act or omission made in good faith by someone who was unaware of any relevant fact must not be treated as deliberate.

Where a housing authority finds a family with children eligible for assistance but intentionally homeless it has a duty to secure accommodation for such a time as will give the applicant a reasonable opportunity to secure accommodation for his/herself and to ensure that the applicant is provided with advice and assistance in any attempts to secure accommodation. This means that the situation could arise where families find themselves without accommodation or any prospect of further assistance from the housing authority.

Housing authorities must have arrangements in place to ensure that families in this position are invited to consent to the housing authority notifying social services of the essential facts of their case. Where families do not give this consent it does not affect housing authorities other responsibilities for disclosure, for example if they have reason to believe that a child is or may be at risk of significant harm.

Children's Services and the arrangement of temporary accommodation

Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 provides that it is the general duty of local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area, and, as far as is consistent with this duty to promote children's upbringing by their families. In responding to their responsibilities under this Section, Children's Services will have to assess the individual needs of children in the context of their family's circumstances, in accordance with the statutory guidance set out in the *Framework for Assessment of Children in Need and their Families* (TSO 2000) Housing agencies may have information about the family that will be relevant to this assessment.

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 introduced an amendment to Section 17 which clarifies that local authorities could use their powers under this Section to provide accommodation for a child who needed to be accommodated with their family. There may be circumstances where local authority Children's Services will assess that it is appropriate to use this power – eg perhaps where a family has been judged “intentionally homeless” and the provision of accommodation by Children's Services offers a viable option to keep a family together whilst a longer term solution to the family's accommodation needs is being worked out.

If local authority Children's Services offers support to children and their families by arranging for them to take up temporary accommodation, then the children involved must remain subject to a 'child in need' plan throughout the intervention.

Guidance to relevant legislation

Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/homelessnesscode

Guidance on the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/socialcare/childrenincare/leavingcare/

Guidance on the Children Act (2004)

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/strategy/guidance/

Guidance on accommodating Children in Need and their families (LAC (2003) 13)

www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Lettersandcirculars/Localauthoritysocialservicesletters/DH_4003946

Framework for the assessment of children in need and their families

www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4003256

Working together to safeguard children: a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (2006):

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00060/

Appendix 4

The New Performance Framework for local authorities and local authority partnerships

In October 2006, Communities and Local Government published the White Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, which focused on improving local authority services. It proposed a new relationship between local and central government that would require central government to be clearer about its priorities and allow local authorities greater freedom and flexibility.

Set out in the White Paper is a new local performance framework which represents the most powerful driver yet for improved collaboration across public services because the outcomes and indicators are owned by local authorities and local strategic partnerships rather than by single local authority departments. The Performance Framework is underpinned by the 198 performance indicators which make up the National Indicator Set.

County and unitary local authorities have a statutory duty to prepare a Local Area Agreement (LAA) for their local area under the *Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act* (2007). An LAA is a set of targets agreed between central government and a local authority and its partners about the priorities for the local area. LAAs are the delivery plan for the long term shared vision and priorities of the Sustainable Community Strategy, which is intended to promote the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of local communities. The vision and priorities should be based on evidence, including consultation with communities, businesses, partners and the voluntary and community sector that tells the 'story' of the area.

Under the new performance framework the local authority and its partner agencies will agree with Central Government (via the Government Office) the national indicators that are most appropriate for assessing the agreed priorities. Up to 35 of the national indicators can have targets set against them in the LAA. Where there are local priorities that are not assessed by the 35 targets, additional local targets can be set, but these are not monitored by government. Local partners will then be assessed against how they perform for each of the LAA targets they have signed up to help deliver.

From April 2009, **Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA)** will replace the comprehensive performance assessment. The CAA is an independent assessment of the prospects for local areas and the delivery of improved outcomes for local people delivered by the local authority alone or in partnership with others, rather than the performance of an individual local authority. It aims to reduce inspection burdens on local authorities through better co-ordination; reduced duplication and better planning to deliver a more risk-based proportionate approach – leading to better use of resources, both for inspectorates and for inspected.

The Local Government White Paper said that the new Comprehensive Area Assessment will have four key elements:

1. **performance against the set of 198 national and local indicators**
2. an annual scored **Use of Resources** judgement for local public sector bodies, that is each local authority, PCT, police authority and fire & rescue authority, drawn from the annual audit
3. an annual scored **Direction of Travel** judgement for each local authority which assesses the effectiveness of each local authority in driving continuous improvement
4. an annual **risk assessment** which identifies the key risks to outcomes or delivery for each area – carried out by all public service inspectorates to ensure a balanced coverage across an area drawing on detailed knowledge of all the individual public service partners in a Local Strategic Partnership – will identify the key risks to outcomes or delivery for each area, reflecting on the robustness of local systems, relationships and external factors and consideration of the effectiveness of action being taken in an area to deliver a judgement on the assessment of those risks and how well they are being managed.

The following table sets out a selection of indicators from the National Framework that effective joint working on youth and family homelessness will help to improve. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list.

Relevant Indicators from the National Indicator Set

Outcome	NI no.	Indicator	PSA/DSO
Safer Communities	19	Rate of proven re-offending by young offenders	PSA 23
	45	Young offenders engagement in suitable education, employment or training	MoJ DSO
	46	Young offenders access to suitable accommodation	MoJ DSO
Children and Young People Every Child Matters Outcome Indicators			
Stay Safe	71	Children who have run away from home/care overnight	DCSF DSO 2
Enjoy and Achieve	91	Participation of 17 year olds in education or training	DCSF DSO 5
Make a Positive Contribution	111	First time entrants to the youth justice system aged 10-17	PSA 14
	115	Substance misuse by young people	PSA 14
Economic Wellbeing	117	16 to 18 year olds not in education, training or employment	PSA 14
Tackling Exclusion and Promoting Equality	141	Number of vulnerable people achieving independent living	CLG DSO 2
	142		PSA 17
	147	Number of vulnerable people supported to achieve independent living	CLG DSO 2
	148		PSA 16
		Care leavers in suitable accommodation	CLG DSO 2
			DCSF DSO 6
		Care leavers in employment, education and training	PSA 16
			CLG DSO 2
			DCSF DSO 6
Local Economy	156	Number of households living in temporary accommodation	PSA 20

Key to Public Service Agreements

- 14 Increase the number of children and young people on the path to success
- 16 Increase the proportion of socially excluded adults in settled accommodation and employment, education or training
- 17 Tackle poverty and promote greater independence and well-being in later life
- 20 Increase long term housing supply and affordability

Key to Departmental Strategic Objectives

CLG DSO 2: To improve the supply, environmental performance and quality of housing that is more responsive to the needs of individuals, communities and the economy.

DCSF DSO 2: Safeguarding the young and vulnerable.

DCSF DSO 5: Ensuring young people are participating and achieving their potential to 18 and beyond.

DCSF DSO 6: Keeping children and young people on the path to success.

Guidance on the New Performance Framework

www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/performanceframeworkpartnerships/

Delivering improved outcomes for children, young people and their families: The crucial role of the new local performance framework (2008)

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/youngpeople

Appendix 5

Tools and resources

Communities and Local Government resources

Guidance on the New Performance Framework

www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/performanceframeworkpartnerships/

The New Performance Framework for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships: Single Set of National Indicators (2007)

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/nationalindicator

Delivering improved outcomes for children, young people and their families: The crucial role of the new local performance framework (2008)

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/youngpeople

National Youth Homelessness Scheme Website

www.communities.gov.uk/youthhomelessness

Policy Briefing 18: Tackling Youth Homelessness (2007)

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/policybriefing18

Homelessness Code of Guidance (2006)

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/homelessnesscode

Homelessness Prevention: a Guide to Good Practice (2006)

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/homelessnessprevention

Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives (Five year homelessness strategy)

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/sustainablecommunitiessettled2

Homelessness Strategies: A Good Practice Handbook (2002)

www.communities.gov.uk/archived/publications/housing/homelessnessstrategies

More than a roof: a report into tackling homelessness (ODPM, 2003)

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/morethan

Homelessness Statistics

www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/housingstatisticsby/homelessnessstatistics/overviewhomelessness/

Statutory homelessness in England: The experiences of families and 16-17 year olds

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/homelessresearchnumber7

Department for Children, Schools and Families resources

Information and guidance on multi-agency working

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/multiagencyworking/benefitsofmultiagency/

The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures (2007)

www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/childrensplan/

Targeted Youth Support: A Guide (2007)

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/targetedyouthsupport/

The Common Assessment Framework: A Manager's Guide

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/caf/

Guidance on Accommodating Children in Need and their families (LAC (2003)13)

www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Lettersandcirculars/Localauthoritysocialservicesletters/DH_4003946

Social Exclusion Task Force resources

Reaching Out: Think Family (2007)

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/families_at_risk.aspx

Think Family: Improving the Life Chance of Families at Risk (2008)

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/families_at_risk.aspx

Background evidence from the Families at Risk Review

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/families_at_risk/review_analysis.aspx

Other Government resources

Care Leaving Strategies – a good practice handbook (DH, DTLR and Centrepont, 2002)

www.dfes.gov.uk/qualityprotects/pdfs/care_strategies.pdf

Non Government resources

National Leaving Care Advisory Service (NLCAS)

www.leavingcare.org/

Youth Homelessness in the UK: A Decade of Progress? (Quilgars D, Johnsen S and Pleace N
(Centrepont and University of York, 2008)

www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings

Appendix 6

Contacts in case study authorities

Authority	Contact	Job title	Email	Phone number
Birmingham St Basils	Chris Bush Marsha Blake	Head of Transitions Prevention Services Manager	chris.p.bush@birmingham.gov.uk manager@prevention.stbasils.org.uk	0121 675 2897 0121 2447324
Brighton and Hove City Council	Nick Hibberd	Head of Housing Needs	Nick.Hibberd@Brighton-Hove.gov.uk	01273 293316
County Durham (Centrepoint)	Rebecca Elton	Regional Development Manager	R.Elton@centrepont.org	0191 384 4033
District of Easington Council	Andrew Burnip	Homelessness & Housing Advice Manager	andrew.burnip@easington.gov.uk	0191 5270501 (ext 4518)
Hove YMCA	Pippa Green	Housing Services Manager	Pippa.Green@hoveymca.org.uk	01273 828828
Hull City Council	Daemon Cartwright	Young People's Support Service Manager	Daemon.Cartwright2@hullcc.gov.uk	01482 331 000
Leicester City Council	Toni Soni	Head of Hostels Service	Toni.Soni@leicester.gov.uk	0116 2526838
Oxfordshire County Council	Clare Rowntree	Housing Development Manager Children, Young People and Families	Clare.Rowntree@Oxfordshire.gov.uk	01865 245359

The National Youth Homelessness Scheme Website contains a wide range of further case study materials relevant to joint work to prevent and tackle youth homelessness:

www.communities.gov.uk/youthhomelessness

Appendix 7

The Housing Options approach

Housing advice provided by local authority staff is increasingly being administered using a 'housing options approach,' a crucial component of the new ethos of homelessness work. This involves a standard procedure whereby all new housing applicants participate in an initial interview to review their housing circumstances and prospects. The aim is to discuss, in detail, the feasibility of securing the applicant's existing accommodation or, failing that, to examine the full range of possible routes to accessing a new tenancy or other accommodation.

The housing options approach transforms the way that those in housing need interact with providers of housing advice. It empowers people by giving them information and advice about the options and services available and enables them to make informed decisions.

John Hills' review on the future role of social housing in England, published in February 2007, highlighted the success of the 'housing options approach' in preventing homelessness, and also praised other 'choice-based' services such as Choice-Based Lettings (CBL) schemes. He saw the value in services which "treat those in need of housing support in a more adult way... moving towards a system where people make more of their own choices from a wider range of options, providing support when people need it". He suggested that the excellent work already being carried out by many local authorities around the provision of housing advice and support could form the baseline for more holistic 'enhanced' housing options services, offering advice around a wider range of issues to a wider audience.

Communities and Local Government has just produced 'Expanding Choice, Addressing Need' which sets out the department's vision for Enhanced Housing Options Services. Enhanced services would build on homelessness prevention work by encouraging people in low and medium as well as high levels of housing need to approach the local authority for housing advice – by intervening early, crises are prevented. Enhanced Housing Options Services would also link housing advice to advice about a range of broader issues – for example employment-related advice around childcare, training, job opportunities and benefits. Finally, Enhanced Housing Options Services would see the local authorities proactively working to engage traditionally 'hard-to-reach' client groups based on local need. Depending on the area, these might be BME communities, young people, ex-offenders, or victims of domestic violence.

Communities and Local Government is funding fifteen 'trailblazers' to test an Enhanced Housing Options Approach.

Expanding Choice, Addressing Need (2008)

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/expandingchoice

Appendix 8

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) at a glance

Adapted from *The Common Assessment Framework for Children and Young People: Managers' Guide*, CWDC (2007)

Status of the CAF

The CAF for children and young people is one of the elements in the delivery of integrated frontline services. This is outlined in the statutory guidance supporting section 10 (interagency co-operation) and section 11 (safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children) of the Children Act 2004. All local authorities and relevant partners have to take account of this guidance. If they decide to depart from it, they must have clear reasons for doing so.

What is the CAF?

The CAF is a shared assessment tool for use across all children's services and all local areas in England. It aims to help early identification of need and promote co-ordinated service provision.

Who is the CAF for?

Children and young people with additional needs, meaning those at risk of poor outcomes in relation to the five Every Child Matters outcome areas.

What does the CAF consist of?

- A common process to enable practitioners to undertake a common assessment and then act on the result
- A standard form to record the assessment
- A pre-assessment checklist to help decide who would benefit from a common assessment.

The CAF covers: development of the child; parents and carers; and family and environment.

Who will use the CAF?

Every practitioner working with children, young people and families should understand the Government outcomes for all children, and know about the CAF or how to complete one. Every organisation offering services to children should ensure at least some of its staff are equipped to complete common assessments.

How does the CAF link with other assessments?

CAF will replace the assessment aspects of the Connexions Framework for Assessment, Planning, Implementation and Review. Other assessments such as universal checks and targeted assessments (for children in need, those with special educational needs etc) will remain in place. The CAF may be appropriate to be used before, or in conjunction with these assessments to help understand and articulate the full range of a child's needs.

How does CAF operate?

There are three main steps in completing a common assessment: preparation, discussion and delivery. A flowchart setting out a generic process for working with a child is included on the following page.

Implementing/embedding the CAF

Led by the director of children's services, partner agencies will need to work together to:

- plan integrated frontline delivery of CAF, lead professional and information sharing procedures
- introduce organisational arrangements to ensure that assessments are of good quality and there are processes for resolving disputes between practitioners
- ensure all practitioners undertaking common assessments, or receiving assessment information, have had criminal records bureau checks to the appropriate level
- consider implementing CAF in a graduated way to review workforce issues.

Training and support

Services locally will need to agree which practitioners will be trained in use of CAF and which need some knowledge of CAF. Operational managers should agree with each of their practitioners:

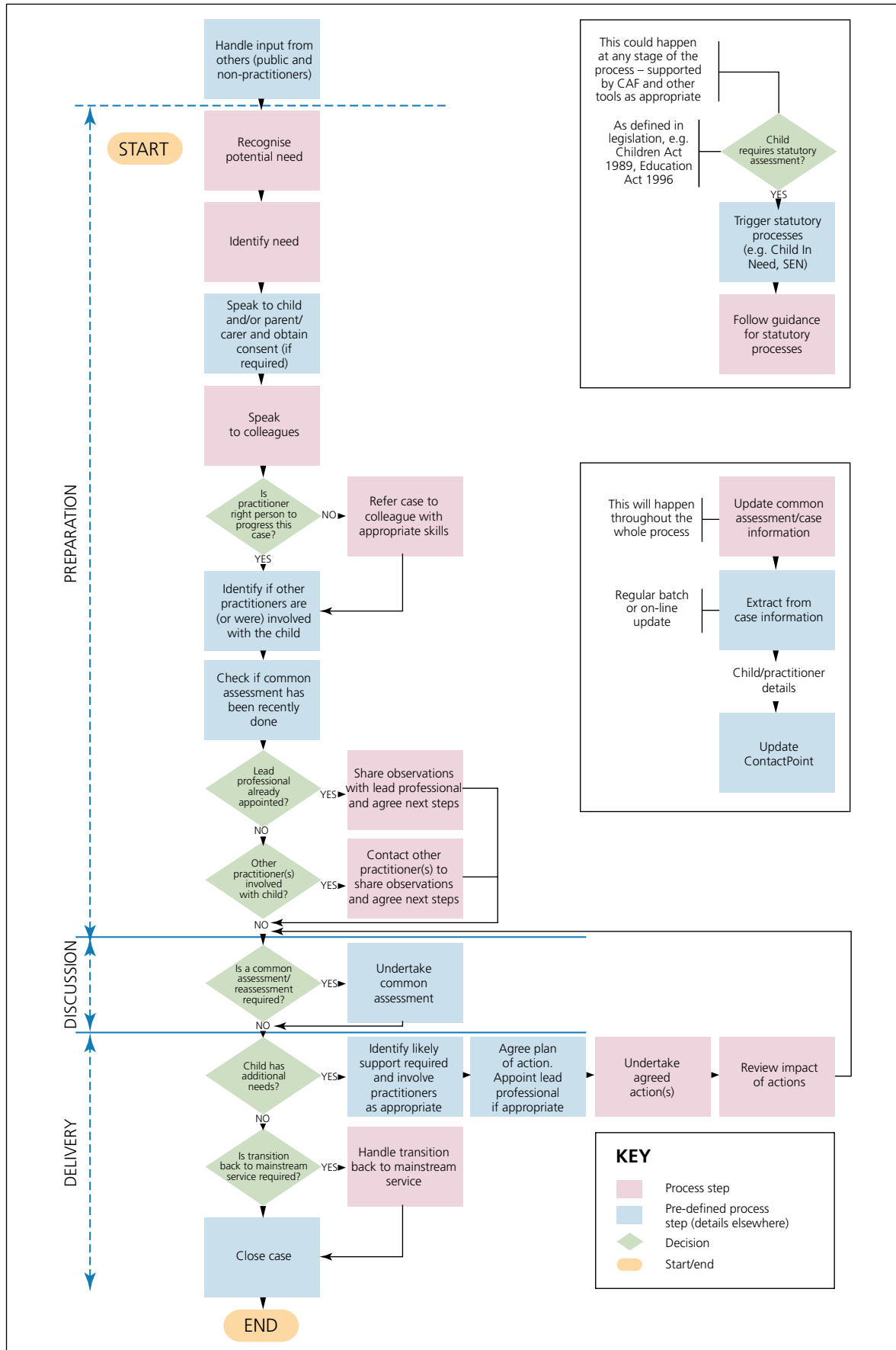
- what their role should be and any development needs
- who can undertake assessments
- how and when they will access training
- how they will be supported in the workplace.

CAF training materials are available as part of the broader training strategy to support integrated working.

The Common Assessment Framework: A Manager's Guide

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/caf/

The Common Assessment Framework: A common service delivery pathway



Appendix 9

ContactPoint

ContactPoint will be the quick way for those working with children and young people to find out who else is working with the same child or young person, making it easier to deliver more coordinated support.

ContactPoint is a key part of the Every Child Matters programme which aims to improve the lives of children and young people with a strong emphasis on early intervention for those who could benefit from additional services, as well as helping to ensure that all children get access to the services to which they are entitled.

ContactPoint will contain basic identifying information about all children and young people in England up to their 18th birthday, and contact details for services working with them. ContactPoint **will not** contain any case information (such as case notes, assessments, medical records, exam results or subjective observations). Access to this basic online directory will be strictly limited to those who need it to do their job. All authorised users will have completed mandatory training, have security clearance (including enhanced Criminal Records Bureau clearance) and have a user name, a password, a PIN and a security token to access ContactPoint.

ContactPoint will be rolled out to local authorities and national partners across England from 2008, starting in the North West and with two of our national partners. The purpose of ContactPoint is to support local agencies in their duties to co-operate to promote the well-being of children, and to safeguard them and promote their welfare, as set down in Sections 10 and 11 of the Children Act 2004 and in the safeguarding duty on school and colleges in Section 175 of the Education Act 2002.

ContactPoint needs to include all children in England because around one-third of children require specialist services of some sort during their childhood. We don't know or can't readily predict who they may be or when they might need them.

Many stakeholders working in children's services have told us that ContactPoint will be a tool which will support the development of more effective practice which leads directly to better outcomes for children and families.

Key service benefits include:

- improved service experience for children, young people and families through more coordinated service delivery
- more timely response to their needs
- reduced number of unnecessary repeat assessments and referrals
- faster and more effective intervention before problems become serious because practitioners will be better informed and able to build a fuller picture of children and young people's needs
- this means that practitioners can spend more time working directly with children and young people; and,
- as ContactPoint will be a national system, it will also benefit children and young people who access services in different local authority areas or move between areas.

Time savings are conservatively estimated to be worth five million practitioner hours per year – equivalent to £88m a year from 2009 onwards – the equivalent of around 20 additional staff per local authority, almost twice the number that directly recruiting staff would provide with the same money.

Appendix 10

NOTIFY

There are particularly high levels of movement between local authority boundaries by families in temporary accommodation in London. NOTIFY is a London-wide web-based notification and information system designed to improve households' access to services. Its primary role is to notify relevant services of the placement or movement of households placed in temporary accommodation by London boroughs under homelessness legislation.

NOTIFY uses information provided by London borough housing departments to notify housing, education, social care, and health services about households placed in, moving between or leaving temporary accommodation. Housing departments, social services departments, local education authorities and primary care trusts receive notifications of placements/ movements into, within and from their area.

NOTIFY is administered by London Councils and supported by Communities and Local Government, London boroughs and London Connects. All London boroughs are strongly encouraged to implement NOTIFY in their area.

NOTIFY

www.notifylondon.gov.uk

Appendix 11

Family intervention projects

Anti-social behaviour can be a cause of intentional homelessness.

Family Intervention Projects are an innovative and proactive response to tackling the small minority of families who cause a disproportionate amount of anti-social behaviour in their community. Projects both challenge and support problem families to address the root causes of their anti-social behaviour and make the necessary changes so that they can live next door to neighbours within a community, without causing any problems.

Family Intervention Projects developed out of the Government's anti-social behaviour strategy which focused on tackling problems such as neighbour nuisance. Typically, a family's anti-social behaviour may also be threatening their tenancies, putting their children at risk or leading to other significant enforcement action.

The FIP Model

While projects vary in the services they provide, they share key features which distinguish the Family Intervention Project model.

- The **key worker** is central to the projects. Their role is to manage or 'grip' the family's problems, co-ordinate the delivery of services and using a combination of support and sanction to assist and motivate the family to resolve problems and change their behaviour
- A **contract** is drawn up between the family and key worker which sets out the changes that are expected, the support that will be provided in order to facilitate that change and the consequences if changes are not made, or tasks are not undertaken
- The **use of sanctions** if necessary is an important lever for motivating families to change
- These are intensely **practical** projects which focus on providing a structure for families
- Projects take a **whole family approach** which recognise the inter- connectedness between children's and adult's problems. Improving **parenting skills** is always a critical aspect of the service.

Evidence

Existing results from independent evaluation of the projects are very positive:

- For more than four out of five (85%) families, complaints about anti-social behaviour ceased or reduced.
- In nine out of ten (92%) cases, the risk to local communities was assessed as having either reduced or ceased completely by the time families left the project.
- In 80 per cent of cases families' housing had stabilised.

Find more information on Family Intervention Projects, including the FIP toolkit and information about the effectiveness of the FIP model, at:

www.respect.gov.uk/members/article.aspx?id=8678&terms=family+intervention+projects&searchtype=2&fragment=False

Appendix 12

Key information from Statutory Homelessness in England: The experience of families and 16-17 year olds

This research report was published on March 2008 and can be found at:

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/experienceoffamilies

This note summarises findings of the cluster analysis carried out on data gathered on a sample of 350 young people who had been accepted as homeless aged 16 or 17.

Cluster analysis is a statistical technique which groups – or clusters – together cases with similar characteristics, whilst maximising the differences between these clusters. This analysis produced four ‘vulnerability clusters’ when carried out on the data on young people, as follows:

Cluster One – ‘multiple problems’. Almost all of the young people in this group had suffered from mental health problems at some point in their lives; they were more than twice as likely to have had problems with drugs, solvents or alcohol as other young respondents; nearly three quarters had been involved in crime or anti-social behaviour; and the great majority had witnessed or experienced violence at home when growing up. One quarter (26 per cent) of young people were classified in this vulnerability cluster.

Cluster Two – ‘mental health and other problems’. Young people in this group were also likely to have suffered mental health problems, but were much less likely to have been involved in crime or anti-social behaviour, or to have had problems related to substance abuse than respondents in Cluster One. Approximately one fifth (21 %) of young people fell into this group.

Cluster Three – ‘offending and other problems’. This group is differentiated from the others by a high level of self-reported involvement in crime and/or antisocial behaviour, but low incidence of mental health problems. One fifth (20%) of young people were classified in this group.

Cluster Four – ‘fewest problems’. Respondents in this group were the least likely to report the following: having been involved in crime or anti-social behaviour, substance abuse or mental health problems, spending time in care, being homeless as a child, running away from home, witnessing or experiencing violence in the home, being on the child protection register, having had their own social worker, or having had their education disrupted when a child. This was the largest group, comprising one third (33%) of all young people.

These vulnerability clusters were strongly associated with gender. Young women were disproportionately represented in the ‘mental health and other problems’ vulnerability cluster (29 per cent of females as compared with 10 per cent of males). In contrast, the proportion of young men in the ‘offending and other problems’ vulnerability cluster was almost twice that of women (28 per cent as compared with 15 per cent).

Young people in the ‘multiple problems’ vulnerability cluster were most likely to have taken action to address their homelessness prior to seeking help from the local authority, with those in the ‘fewest problems’ vulnerability cluster being the least likely to have done so. The report suggests this might be due to those in the ‘multiple problems’ vulnerability cluster having greater awareness of the different services available to those who need support.

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