

Corporate Parenting Responsibilities

Local authorities are responsible for being good "corporate parents" by prioritizing the needs and voices of care leavers in all policy and service decisions. This includes involving care leavers in consultations and decision-making processes.

- *“I think it is important for the council to act as good corporate parents to the young people of Herefordshire as it enables us to have stability. The aide of council staff, versus the lack of, provides a sense of security and ensures that young people do not feel ignored”.*
- *“Find us opportunities like you would for your own children. When you see opportunities have us in mind”*

Pathway Planning

- A pathway plan contains targets and contingency plans for the care leaver covering:
 - Health and wellbeing
 - Employment and training
 - Accommodation
 - Independent living skills
- Completed with a social worker incorporating the wishes of the child
- Reviewed every six months (or when there is a change of home) with the personal advisor

Provision of a Personal Advisor (PA)

- Local authorities must appoint a PA for care leavers aged 18-25.
- In Hereford we aim to co-allocate a personal advisor from the age of 16.
- The personal advisor provides guidance, emotional support, and practical assistance, helping care leavers navigate challenges such as housing, education, employment, and life skills.
- Social and emotional support
- Advocacy

Financial Assistance:

This includes:

- **Setting Up Home Allowance:** Grants of £3,000 to help with the costs of setting up a new home.
- **Financial Guidance:** Care leavers may receive advice on budgeting, managing bills, and accessing benefits or funds for education, employment, or training.
- **Council Tax Exemption:** Many local authorities offer council tax exemptions or reductions for care leavers up to the age of 25.

Current Data – Care Leavers:

- Herefordshire currently supports 377 care leavers of whom 36 (10%) have a disability.
- 212 (56%) are male, of which 27 (7%) are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).
- 165 (44%) are female.
- Currently 27% of placements are out of county.

How do we identify need:

- Needs data is gathered from a variety of sources, including;
 - Demand data from Children Services including the Home Finding Team,
 - Home Point,
 - Various Strategies e.g. Sufficiency Strategy,
 - Information from commissioned contracts.

Prevention of homelessness and provision of accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds who may be homeless and/or require accommodation – Legislative Duties:

- Local Authorities have duties under Part 3 of the Children Act 1989 or Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 to secure or provide accommodation for homeless 16 and 17-year-olds.
- Case law has clarified the relationship between the duty under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 and duties under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 in the case of 16 or 17-year-olds who require accommodation.
- 16 or 17-year-olds who are owed a duty under section 20 of the Children Act 1989, takes precedence over the duties in the 1996 Housing Act.
- However, whilst section 20 of Children Act 1989 takes precedence, housing services also have duties towards young people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- Duties owed by each service will depend on a range of factors:
 - Which service the initially seek help from;
 - The outcomes of any assessments and enquiries;
 - The wishes and felling of the young person and their family.

Legislative Duties (continued):

- There are only two circumstances in which a local authority might find that a homeless young person should not be accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 and may be instead be owed duties under Housing Act 1996. These are where a young person is:
 - Not a child in need;
 - 16 or 17-year-old child in need who, having been properly and fully advised of the implications and having the capacity to reach a decision, has decided that they do not want to be accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 .
- Children's services and housing services have worked together to develop two protocols to support care leavers and 16 and 17-year-olds respectively.

Supported Accommodation Regulations/Ofsted:

In April 2023, The Supported Accommodation regulations were laid before Parliament and brought the new national standards and Ofsted regime into law. From 28th October 2023, registration became mandatory. This means that any supported accommodation provider, accommodating a looked after child or care leaver aged 16 or 17, must be registered with Ofsted by this date, or they will be committing an offence. Ofsted released information on the inspection framework, which details the 3 outcomes model to be used. Formal inspections are currently expected to start in the autumn of 2024:

- **Outcome 1** - Consistently strong service delivery leads to typically positive experiences and progress for children. Where improvements are needed, leaders and managers take timely and effective action. The next inspection will be within approximately 3 years.
- **Outcome 2** - Inconsistent quality of service delivery adversely affects some children's experiences, and this may limit their progress. Leaders and managers must make improvements. The next inspection will be within approximately 18 months.
- **Outcome 3** - Serious or widespread weaknesses lead to significant concerns about the experiences and progress of children. Leaders and managers must take urgent action to address failings. The next inspection will be within approximately 6 months.

The Regulations include the Quality Standards

Quality Standards set out the outcomes that providers are required to achieve, and cover four key areas:

1. **Protection Standard** sets out the requirements to protect young people from harm and abuse. This includes having policies and procedures to safeguard young people, providing appropriate training for staff members, and ensuring that young people have access to advocacy services.
2. **Accommodation Standard** sets out the requirements to ensure young people can access safe and suitable accommodation. This includes providing a clean and comfortable living environment, ensuring that accommodation meets health and safety standards, and provides appropriate cooking, washing, and personal care facilities.
3. **Support Standard** sets out the requirements to ensure young people receive the necessary support to achieve positive outcomes. This includes providing access to education, training, and employment opportunities, as well as help with managing finances, developing life skills, and accessing healthcare services.
4. **Leadership and Management Standard** outlines the requirements for effectively managing supported accommodation. This includes having clear policies and procedures in place, providing appropriate training for staff members, involving young people in decision-making around their care and support, and regularly monitoring and evaluating the quality of support offered.

What housing options are available – Commissioned:

Supported Accommodation for young people aged 16-25 (including homeless young people aged 16 and 17 years old and care experienced young people aged 16-25 years old.) Two contracts are in place:

- **Service 1** delivers homes for 16 young people - 10 accommodation spaces reserved for use by children's services and 6 accommodation spaces reserved for referrals from the housing solutions team – this referral pathway can be flexed if there is need by arrangement with Commissioning. This service also includes 1 unit of emergency accommodation.
- **Service 2** delivers homes for 8 care experience young people and includes 1 accommodation space that can be used as assessment accommodation.

What housing options are available – Commissioned (continued):

Local Framework

- Developed to broaden the available options to accommodate care experienced young people aged 16-25 in Herefordshire. The framework provides the opportunity to source local accommodation, support or both from landlords and support providers. The framework focuses on providers who are able to offer services within Herefordshire and ideally within 10 miles of a care experienced young person's home. Four providers currently operating offering approx. 40 homes for young people in total. **note not exclusive to Herefordshire Care leavers*

County wide Housing related floating support services for people aged 16+

- The service has the capacity to support up to 110 people at any one time, plus their families and support networks. The service also delivers mediation to people aged 16-25, and is developing links with post-16 education settings to deliver education workshops to prevent youth homelessness.
- Herefordshire council are also part of a **regional framework** to deliver supported accommodation for care experienced young people aged 16-25. Staffordshire are the lead authority and placements are arranged via the councils Home Finding Team.

What housing options are available - Non Commissioned:

Herefordshire Council has developed a pathway of accommodation for people who are homeless or rough sleeping aged 18 and over. This can include care leavers. These units were provided using Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) funding under a range of programmes and are all based in Hereford City:

- Homelessness Hub 4 x 1 bed self contained units and 8 rooms with communal shared facilities. Staffing on site to include evenings and weekends;
- 11 x 1 bed en-suite units and 2 x 1 bed self contained pod's, with communal facilities (e.g. kitchen, laundry and lounge). Staffing on site to include support staff and 24 hours caretaker;
- 12 x 1 bed self contained units for transitional accommodation with light touch support provided by the council's rough sleeping outreach team.

Helping young people understand their support/accommodation options:

Herefordshire Council has a specialist **Housing Personal Advisor** who works with Care Leavers who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Working jointly with Commissioning, Social Workers and Housing, the Housing Personal Advisor can assist with both short term and longer terms options and services intended to support young people make a planned transition into independent living.

Staying Put:

- Some young people may wish to remain living with their foster carer(s) when they reach the age of 18 and are no longer 'in care'. This is referred to as a 'staying put'.
- The intention of 'staying put' arrangements is to ensure that young people can remain with their former foster carers until they are prepared for adulthood, can experience a transition akin to their peers, avoid social exclusion and be more likely to avert a subsequent housing and tenancy breakdown.

How do we support move on - Housing in Herefordshire (1):

Home Point and Allocations Policy:

- The Housing Act 1996 requires local authorities to develop and publish allocation schemes for determining the priorities and detailing the procedures to be followed in allocating social housing. As Herefordshire Council does not own any housing stock, it works in partnership with Housing Providers to address housing need through the allocation of social housing via choice based letting scheme, Home Point. Whilst Home Point administers the housing register, it does not make offers of housing. These are made by the Housing Providers.
- It was recognised that more could be done to support care leavers, and as such, the scheme was reviewed and updated to include care leavers being given additional preference. This means young people can register earlier, from the age of 17 ½, (ordinarily applicants must be 18 to register), this added time “ages” the application and means care leavers move up the list quicker than an average young person.
- In addition, Herefordshire care leavers in a supported arrangement through Herefordshire Council can also move to band A (when ready for independent living), which is the highest available banding under the scheme.

How do we support move on - Housing in Herefordshire (2):

Commissioned Providers:

- Tailored, flexible support is provided in line with the persons pathway plan to encourage independence and help people to develop skills to successfully secure and sustain suitable permanent accommodation.
- Support provided can include but is not exhaustive to: managing finances, addressing debt and maximising income, developing domestic and social skills, understanding housing options available along with tenancy rights and the responsibilities of landlords.
- Commissioned providers use a range of tools to support this area of work including bespoke tenancy training courses for those with limited experience of independent living.
- Once jointly assessed as ready for move on providers support young people to register with Home Point providing evidence of work completed to demonstrate their ability to find and keep a future home.
- Once accommodated young people can access the floating support service to ensure additional support is provided to mitigate against tenancy failure.

How do we support move on - Housing in Herefordshire (3):

Private Sector

- Young people can access private rented sector accommodation and can be supported to access a Rent Guarantor Scheme and a cashless bond deposit through the Rent/Bond Loan Scheme.
- Support through these schemes will only be approved/authorised if the accommodation is both affordable and sustainable to the young person for the length of the tenancy.

Home Ownership

- Ownership options vary but where possible, young people will be supported to access affordable home ownership properties. In Herefordshire advice on low cost home ownership schemes is available on Herefordshire Council website.

Next steps:

- Redesign of Service 2 to widen scope including potential to add additional homes as step down accommodation and offering an end to end service.
- Additional in county shared accommodation options for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) to be explored along with shared tenancy schemes
- Consideration of agreements with housing providers to provide direct lets for care leavers either as standalone procedures or as part of further enhancements to the local allocations scheme

What's in the accommodation pipeline:

- Single Homeless Accommodation Programme (SHAP).
- Funding received from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to purchase 15 x 1 bed units by March 2025.
- The units will be available for vulnerable young people aged between 18-25.
- 7 x 1 beds have already been purchased (Sept 24).
- The units will be used as step down accommodation for young people requiring light touch support.
- The units will be managed by Caring for Communities and People (CCP) on a 6 year lease.
- We work with housing providers to deliver housing through planning policy.
- Strategic Housing has secured £5 million capital for move on accommodation.
- 2 units in Hereford City Centre being converted for a minimum to 6 x 1 bed self contained units (subject to planning permission).

Education, Employment, and Training (EET) Support:

- **Education and Training Support:** Bursaries for higher education and help with travel, equipment, and tuition fees.
- **Employment Support:** They may offer career advice, mentoring, apprenticeships, internships, or work placement opportunities.
- **Guaranteed Apprenticeships:** Some authorities offer guaranteed apprenticeships within their organizations or with partner employers.
- **University support:** Education bursary of £2,000 and accommodation in the summer holidays.
- **Bespoke mentoring:** for children at risk of becoming 'not in training, education or employment (NEET)

Health and Wellbeing Support:

- **Mental and Physical Health Services:** Commissioned health services, and emotional well-being programs, through the Independent Care Board (ICB)
- **Consultant psychologist (through CAMHS):** To better understand and support trauma
- **Healthy Living Programs:** These can include guidance on nutrition, fitness, sexual health, and substance misuse.
- **Membership to HALO.**
- **Safer connections:** local authority-funded therapeutic support service for care experienced children.

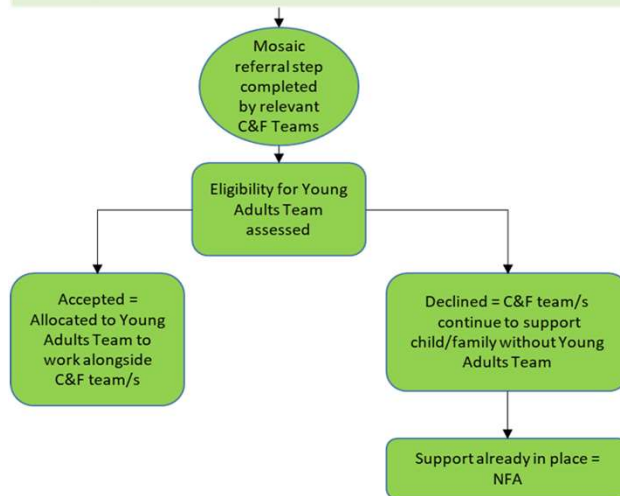
Moving up to adulthood pathway:

Referrals from Teams in Children and Families Directorate (C&F) for children & young people 16 – 25 years old who are likely to have ASC needs and will need a managed transition:
 (with provision within workflow for early notification to ASC at 14, for ASC to begin attending EHCP reviews alongside Children's):

- Children with disabilities team
- SEND team
- Care experienced children and young adults teams
- Early Help

Referrals can be made regardless of whether the child has an EHCP

Non exclusive list

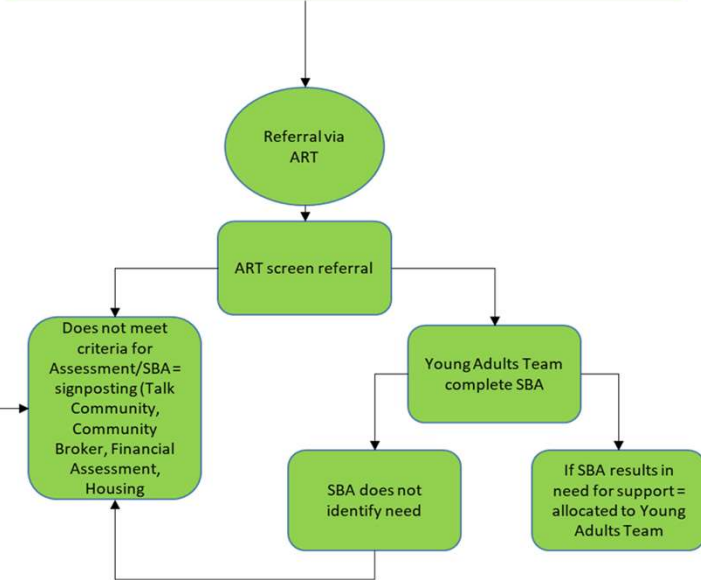


External referrals for young people aged 18-25 (who are not already known):

- Individuals directly
- Individuals' families/carers directly
- Health services
- Schools & colleges*

*For 18+ year olds only; younger children would be referred directly to Children's

Non exclusive list

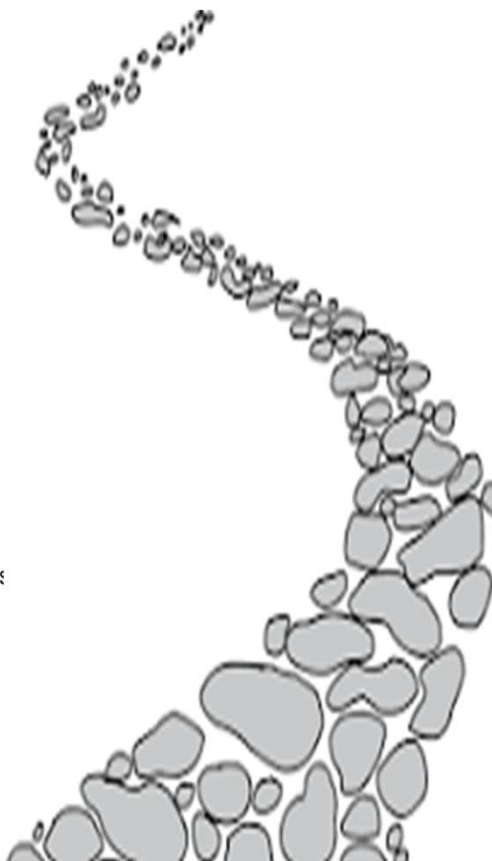


How we ensure this is a seamless service:

- Monthly meetings between young adults team and Children with Disabilities (CWD) team.
- Shared 'tracker' for children moving up to adulthood.
- Early notification referrals are made for children with complex needs at 14 to enable proactive planning.
- Young Adults team attend annual reviews of a child's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) from the age of 15.
- Continuing Healthcare (CHC) assessments are undertaken together at 17 alongside children and their parents.
- Mental Capacity Assessments (MCA) are undertaken together where needed.
- Young Adults team attends children's Complex Needs Panel on a monthly basis to inform future planning.
- Young Adults team and CWD service manager are together building a 'moving up' group, to support a multi-agency space to provide advice and support to practitioners supporting young people with complex needs.
- Young Adults team attend preparation for adulthood events at the local colleges.
- CWD staff are trained in undertaking MCA assessments.
- Named transitions lawyer who supports young people from 16 up to adulthood.
- Talk Community support as part of the Strengths Based Assessments prior to 18.
- Continuation of service arrangements for direct payments to prevent the stop/start and gap in services for children and young people.
- CWD continue to support care experienced young people up to the age of 25 where they have eligible needs from adult social care and/or health. Where this is relevant, staff work together in partnership inclusive of colleagues from the Special educational needs (SEN) team to support young people.
- Preparing for adulthood 'tracker' shared with the SEN team to co-produce plans for young people which considers their goals, care and education needs where young people have an EHCP.

Joint working story board:

- Liam was open to the CWD team as a child in care from 2012.
- The young adults team and Liam's children's social worker attended Liam's annual reviews from 2019 to start to get to know him.
- Prior to Liam turning 18, a joint assessment was undertaken with Liam, involving his family and both the young adults and children's teams. The plan was agreed that it was in Liam's best interests and wishes to remain with his foster carers under a 'staying put' arrangement. This was appropriate for Liam as he continued to access his education and wanted to remain at home.
- During this time Liam was supported to develop his independence skills, this included support from his carers such as to learn to cook, clean and maintain his home, Liam's travel training was also agreed through his EHCP.
- Liam spoke about wanting to move out, he was supported to visit placements by his Personal Advisor [CWD] and adults Social Worker.
- Liam changed his mind!
- Liam has been supported to remain with his foster carers under Shared Lives, following successful assessment.



- *Present day....*
- Liam continues to live with his carers, he has a LA appointed Deputy to support with his finances. This is reviewed regularly and Liam is having increasing opportunities to budget and develop these skills.
- Liam attends Houghton day opportunities which is a working farm in the community, Liam is developing his employability skills. This is supported via Liam's EHCP.
- Liam's goal is to work towards supported living, to support this goal Liam continues to be supported by his Personal Advisor and social worker to create a clear moving on plan, and ensure he has the support he needs to make his step into independence as successful and enjoyable as possible.
- Liam's team continue to work together to ensure he is reaching his goals, is safe, has opportunities in education and in readying for independence.
- Most importantly, Liam tells us he is happy, he is excited to work towards his goal of being independent and having supported living arrangements in place.