**Wiltshire Council’s Accommodation & Support Protocol for Care Experienced Young People**



**APRIL 2023**

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| Children in Care Team – CIC Team | Personal Adviser – PA |
| Property & Support Service – P&S Service | Social Worker – SW |
| Housing Solutions Service – HS Service |  |

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1. **Introduction**

This protocol outlines how Wiltshire Council’s Children in Care Team (CIC Team) will work together with the Property & Support Service (P&S Service) and Housing Solutions Service (HS Service) to support care experienced young people as they transition from placements funded by Wiltshire Council into suitable, long-term accommodation.

The council’s aim is for children and young people in the care system to make transitions to adulthood which are seamless and where their educational, training and employment aspirations are realised. However, it is recognised that the journey from care can often be difficult for some young people, and the degree of success can have an impact on outcomes well beyond early adulthood. Young people can become adult in one area of their lives, but not in others. For some young adults, their transition to adulthood can be extended and delayed until they are emotionally and financially ready, and they have the qualifications they need and aspire to. Securing suitable accommodation for care experienced young people is, therefore, much more than just finding them somewhere to stay.

As corporate parents, we want to ensure young people are well equipped and understand their own level of skill and aspirations for their future. Corporate parenting means doing the utmost we can for looked after children and care experienced young people, to give them the same opportunities as other children and to promote the best possible outcomes for them. Care experienced young people like all young people, will make mistakes and require support to learn from their experiences.

We want to ensure care experienced young people are aware of the full range of options available to them. We recognise that good housing underpins success in other areas of life. Secure, safe and stable accommodation is an essential building block for success and achievement in education, training and employment, and has a direct impact on emotional health and wellbeing. It is therefore essential that a multi-agency approach is adopted when securing and sustaining accommodation for care experienced young people; agencies must work together to meet their statutory duties and corporate parenting responsibilities to provide a safe and supportive pathway to independent living. Care experienced young people need to be well prepared to live independently and their housing needs must be addressed before they leave care via pathway planning.

As well as setting out the roles, responsibilities, and arrangements for achieving planned supportive transitions to independent living, this protocol will help to promote and safeguard the wellbeing of young people, ensuring that, when young people are ready to live independently, their housing needs are met and that they have the skills, knowledge, help and support to do so successfully.

1. **Purpose of the Accommodation and Support Protocol for care experienced young people**

This protocol is an agreement between the Housing Solutions Service, Property & Support Service and the Children in Care Team:

* This protocol sets out a commitment for Wiltshire Council to prevent care experienced young people from becoming homeless and reduce the number triggering a homelessness application.
* Sets out our commitment to developing services ([Wiltshire’s Care Leaver Promise](https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/article/4970/Introduction)) for care experienced young people.
* Develop a "corporate parenting" approach towards care experienced young people to ensure a successful transition into independent living through support, preparation, and the provision of suitable accommodation.
* To jointly assess and meet the diverse housing and support needs of our young people leaving care through the application of clear and consistent pathways so they don’t have to navigate through a range of agencies, assessments and processes.
* Identify how CIC Team, P&S Service, and HS Service can, by working together, meet the needs of care experienced young people and effectively discharge the Council’s duties in line with government guidance and benchmarked good practice, ensuring that there are no gaps in services and that resources are effectively used.
* To jointly ensure that all staff within the three teams, and wider, are aware of the housing needs of young people leaving care and the obligations of each team to address their needs. This will include on-going joint training, a robust induction process and opportunities to shadow experienced officers.
* To ensure that Commissioning of accommodation and services for young people leaving care is based upon evidence of upcoming need.
1. **Who does this Protocol apply to?**

The Local Authority is the corporate parent of children in care and therefore has a legal and moral duty to provide the kind of support that any good parent would provide to their own children.

This is a legal responsibility which extends to all departments within the council.

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

**Eligible child** - A child aged 16 and 17 who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who is still looked after.

**Relevant child** - A child aged 16 and 17 who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who has left care. This also includes young people who were detained (e.g., in a youth offending institution or hospital) when they turned 16 but immediately before that were looked after.

**Former relevant child** - A young person (YP) over 18 who was previously ‘eligible’ or ‘relevant’. Local authorities support this group at least until age 21, or some duties until age 25.

**Qualifying Children** – A young person under 21 who stopped being looked after, after the age of 16 and is in full-time higher or further education. This includes young people who are under a special guardianship order.

**Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Young People** - A young person who qualifies for a leaving care service from Wiltshire Council and who has been granted refugee status. Also, those who qualify and are given leave to remain up to the age of 21 years or who have an extension beyond the age of 18 for a minimum of one year.

In addition, care experienced young people who are the responsibility of another local authority but who reside in the Wiltshire Council area and can show a local connection to Wiltshire will fall within the remit of this protocol.

1. **Corporate Parenting principles**

When exercising their functions in relation to children in care and care experienced young people, Wiltshire Council recognises and has regard to the seven Corporate Parenting principles identified In the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

These are:

*(a) to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people.*

*(b) to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.*

*(c) to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people.*

*(d) to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners.*

*(e) to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people.*

*(f) for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work.*

*(g) to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.*

1. **Legislative Framework**

This protocol refers to the following legislation:

* Part 6 Housing Act (1996)
* Part 7 Housing Act (1996) (as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017)
* Children Act 1989
* Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
* S 1, 2 and 3 of the Children and Social Worker Act 2017
* Equality Act 2010

Statutory guidance that this document refers to:

The Homelessness Code of Guidance (2018) - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities>

Statutory Guidance on applying corporate parenting principles to looked after children and care leavers (2018) –

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/applying-corporate-parenting-principles-to-looked-after-children-and-care-leavers>

The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations Volume 2: care planning, placement and case review

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/441643/Children_Act_Guidance_2015.pdf>

The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations Volume 3: planning transition to adulthood for care leavers 4

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-transition-to-adulthood-for-care-leavers>

Extending PA support for all care leavers to age 25 (2018)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/extending-personal-adviser-support-to-age-25>

Local Offer Guidance – <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-offer-guidance>

1. **Working together to assess and meet the housing and support needs of care experienced young people**

The success of this Protocol is dependent on the efficient and effective sharing of information between organisations and services.

All front-line officers will work in a holistic and trauma informed way to ensure that the needs of the young person are at the forefront of their work. To accurately assess and meet a young person’s needs, information relevant to their housing and support needs must be shared between CIC Team, HS Service, P&S Service and, where appropriate, housing support providers.

The young person’s written permission must be sought before the exchange of information can take place and this permission should be obtained at the earliest opportunity and forwarded to the HS Service for their records as part of the young person’s application for housing. Not all of the information in the young person’s Pathway Plan is relevant to their housing application. It is, however, expected that the care experienced young people will give their permission for *all relevant* information to be shared and, specifically, for their Pathway Plan to be shared, historic and sensitive information may be redacted at the request of the young person.

The young person’s pathway plan will identify their housing and support needs and what action is required to prepare the young person for independent living. It must reflect the young person’s current circumstances, provide a clear analysis of the needs of the young person, and set out how these needs will be met.

The information in the pathway plan and Housing Needs & Circumstance Assessment will inform the multi-agency assessment that all services will adopt, working together with other housing and support providers to meet the young person’s housing needs.

This multi-agency assessment will identify the specific needs of the young person and will be informed, as appropriate, by meetings with all parties, including talking to and appreciating the young person’s views.

As stated in the statutory guidance, contingency or “back up” plans should also be in place. For some young people, a more detailed contingency plan will be needed – for those in foster care, coming out of custody etc. Some young people placed outside Wiltshire may want to stay where they are placed due to links that they have developed so it is important for there to be detailed planning around their accommodation needs as it may not be automatic or straightforward that they will have priority for housing or that the local authority in question will recognise their “residency criteria” to be considered for social housing.

When CIC Team refers a young person to the HS Service via the “Duty To Refer” route, a copy of the relevant section(s) of the pathway plan must be attached. The CIC team should work collaboratively and proactively with the HS and P&S Service to ensure that the young person’s needs and circumstances are fully understood and reflected in the Housing Needs & Circumstance Assessment which is statutorily required.

1. **Operational Framework**
	1. **Prepare for the reality of housing**

With young people, identify and plan their accommodation pathway for when they leave care / custody / out of authority area / restricted eligibility.

Young people in care need relevant and accurate information about what will happen when they leave care, where they might live and the pros and cons of various options so that they can make informed choices about their future. The learning takes place in the context of formal and informal life skills training at home and at school in their early teenage years as they consider their educational choices and decide where their futures lie in further, higher education, training and employment terms. Foster carers, residential workers, social workers (SW), the HS and P&S Service and PA have a vital role to play in preparing young people for the reality of living more independently and making them aware of their housing options when they leave care. The preparation and intended next steps should be written into the young person’s pathway plan.

This protocol will cover the journey for care experienced young people aged 16 years and over. However, preparation and support during the transition to adulthood should not only start on their 16th birthday. Planning for beyond their time in the care should be integral to the care planning process throughout a young person’s time in care and is the responsibility of all professionals working with the young person. By the age of 16 years and 3 months, all care experienced young people will have a Needs Assessment in place as to the advice, assistance and support they will need when leaving care. This should consider a young person’s independent living skills, ability to manage their own finances and their views and wishes to ensure they leave care at a time that is right for them.

The Care Experienced Independent Living Skills form (ILS) is a supplement to the Pathway Plan in understanding a young person’s needs. A short form, it is a snapshot of the young person’s tenancy support needs, current support provision and how any risks to the sustainability of a tenancy are being managed. It is made available to any prospective social landlord’s lettings team, to inform any assessment of a young person’s suitability for accommodation with the landlord concerned.

The difference between the ILS and the Pathway Plan is that the latter is a holistic document which informs the personalised housing plan which follows any homelessness application be informed by the Pathway Plan. The Pathway Plan can be redacted of historical information which is irrelevant to the ability to sustain a tenancy and any risks to the sustainability of a tenancy if this is a young person’s preference as follows -

* information relating to the young person’s historic care history except that which is relevant to the safety of the young person and others
* information relating to the young person’s health where this is not relevant to housing need e.g. reproductive and sexual health

Information about mental health issues which would make a young person more vulnerable ought to be shared, alongside any information about substance misuse issues, offences which are not spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act and any adaptation and support needs.

See Appendix 1 for a clear checklist for understanding the needs of a young person when transitioning from care.

Because young people who are looked after are living in a variety of diﬀerent arrangements, it is important to make sure they get bespoke information and tailored advice, based on their individual circumstances alongside more general information about housing options.

* As soon as possible after the Needs Assessment is completed the allocated SW will prepare an initial pathway plan. Each young person will be central to drawing up their own pathway plan and will be supported to set goals and how to achieve them.
* The pathway plan will be kept under regular review with a contingency plan in place in case the proposed plan breaks down.
* Up until the age of 18, while they remain in care, all young people will have an Independent Reviewing Officer whose role is to ensure goals set are being met in a timely way and that the care plan reflects the young person’s needs.
* All care experienced young people will be eligible for support from a PA from the age of 16 years until their 25th birthday; this includes care experienced young people who return for support from the children in care team after the age of 21 years.
* The role of the PA is to support young people to prepare them to live independently and offer advice and support. Sometimes for those young people under the age of 18 the role of the PA is undertaken by a SW.
* From the age of 12 years all young people in care will start working to develop their independent living skills.
* Where providers of semi-independent accommodation have their own life skills toolkits, it will be important to ensure they cross reference with the pathway plan. To ensure a joined-up approach the progress will be reviewed and monitored at each statutory Looked After Child (LAC) review by the allocated Independent Reviewing Officer.
* The Young Persons allocated SW or PA will ensure, where appropriate, all claims for benefits are submitted 4 weeks prior to the young person turning 18. To avoid unnecessary delays, the young person will need to have appropriate ID, bank account and NINO details in place.
* Young people who are of EU nationality, will be supported to apply for settled status as early as possible to ensure no delay in their eligibility for public funds. See Appendix 2 for guidance on eligibility for immigration restricted care experienced young people.
* Young people leaving custody will need to have additional support so that they can transition successfully. See Appendix 3 for further information.
* Those young people who have eligible care and support needs, and those young people who do not meet the eligibility criteria but who are still vulnerable and therefore under the wellbeing principle of the Care Act 2014, should be referred to the monthly Transitions panel. Panel will identify the most appropriate adult team to allocate to and determine timescales for transfer.

The Corporate Parenting Panel is the primary vehicle for Councillors to meet with key officers and to make sure that the Council is meeting its duties towards children looked after and care experienced young people and scrutinise the performance, quality and efficacy of Wiltshire Council’s services and those of partner agencies.

The Corporate Parenting Panel will comprise up to 8 Core Members drawn from elected members politically balanced and nominated by group leaders. Group leaders will ensure that they appoint substitute members to cover absences.

Associate Members will include officers from the council and key partner agencies and comprise of:

1. Corporate Director for People (DCS)
2. Director – Families and Children’s Services
3. Head of Service for Children in Care and Young People
4. Senior Commissioning Officer – Children’s Social Care (Voice and Influence)
5. A Representative/s from the Children in Care Council
6. Cabinet Member for Children’s Services
7. Chair or representative of Wiltshire Fostering Association
8. Service Manager – Quality Outcomes
9. Designated Doctor/Nurse for Looked After Children
10. Virtual School Head/Service Manager – Vulnerable Groups

If any of the core members are unable to attend a meeting, they will send a substitute representative.

Above all, as corporate parents, we need to help the young person plan for the realities of adulthood and manage their expectations.

* 1. **Plan young people’s accommodation and support options with them**

Whilst a young person is in care, the Council provides services to develop their understanding of adult life to plan for their Pathway Plan to ensure that the child has a seamless transition to adulthood and is able to make the choices available to all children. Excellent planning and preparation will support better outcomes for young people, as well as giving them personal assurance about their next steps into adult life. PA and carers should help young people to understand diﬀerent housing options available to them and work closely with colleagues in the HS Service to help explain and access suitable options. With a better understanding of the reality of living more independently, young people are empowered to make a well-informed choice about what is right for them.

Pathway plans set out when a young person will formally leave care and the intended next steps. The Children Act 1989 stipulates that all eligible, relevant and former relevant children should have a pathway plan, which should be a living document that is reviewed regularly. Pathway plans should be completed within 28 days of a care experienced young person changing their accommodation. SWs and PAs will have the information to be able to plan those moves well in advance.

When a young person reaches the age of 18 years they are no longer ‘in care’ and they can access their own accommodation and can legally hold a tenancy. The CIC Team’s duty to provide the care experienced young person with regulated accommodation will end when the young person reaches the age of 18.

As every young person develops at their own pace, and some young people will need more time than others, it is not assumed that all young people will be ready to live independently when they reach the age of 18. All young people should have staged exits from care that work for them.

The Placement panel meets weekly, and the purpose of the Panel is:

To ensure statutory, policy and good practice requirements are met regarding Care Planning.

To ensure the requirement for a Placement Plan at point of accommodation has been met. To identify areas of unmet need for children assessed as needing to be looked after.

The Children in Care / Care Leavers Accommodation Destination (CLAD) review meeting takes place at the 4th Placement Panel of each month, the purpose is to discuss and review the accommodation/move on plans for young people age 16+ and to identify what additional support is needed to ensure the young person is being prepared for independence. The panel is chaired by the Head of Service for Children in care and young people or the Service Manager for Children in care and Placement services and is attended by the Head of Housing and Children’s Services Housing Caseworker along with other relevant professionals.

All Authorities are required under s2 of the Children & Social Work Act 2017 to [publish a local offer](https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/article/4970/Introduction), which sets out the services and the support available for care experienced young people.

To support a young person’s move on, the pathway plan should include tasking the young person to complete a tenancy training course. Wiltshire has its own online course, details of which can be found at Appendix 4.

* 1. **Reduce housing crisis**

Planning early and having contingency plans in place to prevent crisis from escalating.

Most young people move on from care into independent accommodation without being put at risk of becoming homeless and are able to sustain their own accommodation with or without added support.

The pathway plan should, however, have contingency planning in place in readiness to respond to emergencies such as being at risk of homelessness. This would include care experienced young people who have a history of placement breakdown and/or who have additional issues such as mental health issues, learning disabilities, substance misuse and offending backgrounds. PAs who identify and intervene where a placement may be breaking down can bring those concerns to the CLAD.

Early engagement with the HS Service and P&S Service will also help with things like helping the young person address rent arrears or where placements are becoming more precarious, with practical help to work with landlords to mediate solutions. PAs should identify where there is a risk and be mindful of their statutory duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 to refer cases where homelessness within 56 days is possible.

If it is identified that a young person’s tenancy is at risk, the HS Service and CIC Team can send a referral to the Council’s Tenancy Sustainment team in the P&S Service via tenancysustainment@wiltshire.gov.uk. The Council’s Young Person Tenancy Sustainment Officer will then provide additional holistic support to sustain the young person’s accommodation and prevent them from becoming homeless.

A range of homelessness prevention tools can be used to try to prevent a young person becoming homeless and the earlier this work starts, the more likely it is to be successful, so early intervention is key. Homelessness should never be considered an acceptable option for a young person and all possible avenues should be explored to prevent it happening. The HS Service and P&S Service can negotiate with landlords/family/friends, offer incentives and help to clear arrears, can help put in place a payment plan that works for all sides to ensure the accommodation can continue and even negotiate an Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC), where necessary, where a young person’s accommodation is at risk through their behaviour.

Wiltshire Council have dedicated officers to prevent young people from becoming homeless (Appendix 8)

* 1. **Access housing and support as needed**

Depending on whether or not the young person is ready to live independently, there are a number of accommodation options available to young people who are aged 18 or over including.

During any tenancy ‘sign up’, the SW or PA and the landlord or their representative should exchange their contact details and the contact details of their organisations. They should agree on the liaison arrangements and the timing and frequency of the follow-up interviews and home visits that will be undertaken. As well as agreeing to work together to address any problems or concerns, the CIC team and the landlord or their agent will agree to alert one another, at an early stage, if problems do occur or they are concerned about the care experienced young person’s wellbeing or behaviour. An early alert or referral will enable all sides to assess the care experienced young person’s situation and work with them to address and resolve any problems before they become so serious as to put the young person’s tenancy at risk. It is the responsibility of the CIC team and the landlord to work with care experienced young people, and with one another, to sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness. Possession proceedings should only ever be initiated after both the CIC team and the HS Service has had the opportunity to meet with the tenant and landlord to try and resolve any problems and there has been concerted efforts made by each responsible agency to prevent this.

Accommodation pathways available to young people in Wiltshire are as follows –

* + 1. **Staying Put**

Wiltshire Council has a staying put offer for care experienced young people up until the age of 21 years, for those young people currently in a foster placement. The allocated SW will ensure this option is discussed at every review to ensure young people and foster carers understand the process and any possible financial implications.

* + 1. **Post -16 Supported Accommodation for Care Experienced young people**

We commission a range of supported accommodation for children in care who are post 16 and for care experienced young people, both within Wiltshire and out of county.

We have 10 Block and 27 Framework contracts. The 3 Block providers we currently use are Alabare, Key2 and CCP.

Support packages are commissioned depending on the needs of the young person and can include overnight support, packages are regularly reviewed. The average weekly support package is 12 hours per week.

As an alternative to hostel type accommodation, we have a number of supported lodgings hosts who are recruited and supported by the Kinship and Fostering team and we are also in the process of re-commissioning an external supported lodgings provider.

* + 1. **Staying Close**

Wiltshire Council has recently been successful in applying to the DfE for grant funding to establish and deliver a Staying Close offer to help care experienced young people moving on from residential care to continue receiving support after they have left care. The project will support 30 young people over the 3-year period. The offer will initially focus on Care experienced young people who are 17 and due to leave residential care as well as those who have left in the last two years. Each young person will have an allocated Young Person Tenancy Sustainment Officer to provide holistic and trauma informed support to sustain their accommodation and prepare them for independent living.

* + 1. **Housing-funded Supported Accommodation**

There are a variety of young people’s supported accommodation schemes in Wiltshire such as the Foyer, Alabare Place and Unity House. Wiltshire Council also has a number of Parent & Baby schemes for those young people who have become parents. These schemes generally offer a room with shared facilities and on-site housing related support services. Individuals can stay up to 2 years before moving on to independent living using the Council’s move-on protocol. Move on options will consist of either financial assistance into a private rented property or an allocation of social housing. During their time in supported housing, a young person will learn life skills such as budgeting, cooking, cleaning and how to be a good tenant. The experience of living in supported housing plays an important role in building some young people’s confidence and ensuring they are prepared and ready for living independently.

* + 1. **Living with family, friends or relatives**

For some young people it might be the right option to return to living with family. All practitioners should consider this option.

* + 1. **Private rented accommodation**

Due to the shortage of social housing across Wiltshire, another option that needs be explored is to rent privately from a landlord; this allows more flexibility in location and timescale. Accommodation can be found either though a letting agent, directly with a landlord or through contacts with landlords made through the P&S Service. Wiltshire Council offers support with rent in advance/deposit and if required can be a guarantor in some circumstances. To ensure the property is affordable, the allocated SW or PA should work with the HS Service to assess affordability to ensure the property is suitable and can meet the young person’s needs. Wiltshire Council’s CIC Team can offer to act as a rent guarantor to care experienced young people where they have a sufficient income to cover rent and associated living expenses but where landlords require someone to guarantee the rent. This is assessed on a case-by-case basis.

* + 1. **Social Housing**

Any Wiltshire Care experienced young person aged under 25 who is assessed as ready for independent living will be placed into Band 1 in the care experienced category and will automatically have a local connection to Wiltshire if they are ready for independent living

Before applying for social housing, the allocated SW or PA will need to take into account whether the young person -

* understands the responsibility of managing their own tenancy
* has completed the council’s tenancy awareness course
* has a local connection to the area where they are seeking accommodation

PAs and SWs should understand the detail of what a housing application and choice-based lettings involves and ensure they have got the information and evidence to be able to make an application for the scheme with the young person in a timely manner that allows for plenty of time to allow for the young person to find the right accommodation for them and make a planned move on into it. Appendix 5 contains information on the scheme, how it works and what information will be required.

All Wiltshire Council Care experienced young people who have never lived independently and are assessed as ready for independent living may apply to join the council’s Housing Register if they qualify in terms of their eligibility for an allocation of accommodation, their housing debts and their anti-social behaviour history in the last 12 months.

The waiting time will vary in each area and so the Pathway Plan will need to reflect this and contain details of the other housing options which the CIC Team is pursuing to help the young person secure accommodation if the young person needs to move on from their current placement before a property is secured. The homelessness safety net is a last resort.

* + 1. **Shared Lives**

The Shared Lives Service helps people live as part of a family, within the carers home, where they receive the support or care that they need. The service places adults who have mental health needs or learning disabilities, physical impairments, or are elderly, or those who, for a variety of reasons, cannot manage to live without support. Shared Lives carers provide support with daily tasks, from personal care and accessing health services, to making decisions and learning new skills. In order to access the service a needs assessment is required to be completed by Adult social care to ensure that a person has eligible and unmet social care needs.

* + 1. **University Halls/Holiday accommodation**

Most universities will offer accommodation in student halls or residence for the first year, and in some universities care experienced young people are able to remain in halls beyond year 1. When agreed as part of the Pathway Plan, Children’s services will meet the young person’s housing /accommodation rental costs (based on halls of residence/local rented accommodation rates) for the period of their course.

Young people who are ‘staying put’ are included in these arrangements when a continuing staying put arrangement forms part of the Pathway Plan who moves to attend a course of Higher education. In these circumstances the staying put carer will also receive a retainer while the young person lives in housing at their university.

**7.5 Building relationships with landlords**

It is important from the outset that in any tenure type – private, social or supported housing - the landlord and CIC team should work proactively and collaboratively to support the young person in sustaining their accommodation. Good communication, effective joint working and outcome focused problem solving will all play a vital role in ensuring that the CIC team and the landlord are aware of any difficulties that the young person is having and are able to provide creative solutions to the problems they are experiencing.

**7.6 Council Tax and Universal Credit**

An application for Universal Credit and Council Tax Support should be completed if the young person is unemployed or receiving a low income. If the young person moves into independent accommodation, they will not be required to pay Council Tax until they are 25 years old as this cost is covered by the CIC Team as part of Wiltshire’s Care leaver Promise.

It is important for the young person to know whether they should claim their housing costs through Housing Benefit or whether they need to apply for Universal Credit. Under current guidelines a claim for Housing Benefit can only be made if they fall into one of these categories:

* They live in supported exempt accommodation
* They have been placed in temporary accommodation by Wiltshire Council
* They are currently in receipt of the Severe Disability Premium as part of an existing claim for JSA, ESA, Income Support and Housing Benefit, or receive the Severe Disability Premium.

If the young person does not fall into one of these categories, then they should be making an application for Universal Credit online. Universal Credit awards contain a housing costs element which helps with rent and potential service charges. Ideally, the young person should arrange to pay this directly to their landlord to avoid rent arrears.

It is important the correct decision is made on whether to apply for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit as any delay caused by an incorrect application for Housing Benefit may see the young person lose out on any potential Universal Credit award.

1. **Positive move-on and prevention of homelessness**

The council will develop a range of move-on options, work with landlords to reduce evictions and with other partners to develop a range of housing options.

Well planned moves are in the best interests of young people. Crisis or emergency moves are much less likely to support good outcomes and may set the young person back in other areas of their lives, such as education, training or employment but also have a wider impact on their confidence and wellbeing.

As corporate parents, our role does not stop when the front door closes as we recognise that we have to continue to be able to guide and support young people in whichever accommodation choice they make, being able to step up our support if things don’t go according to plan.

Prior to taking up any accommodation, the PA should take into account that young person’s specific support needs and ensure that appropriate support is in place for them. All young people should have completed the Wiltshire Council tenancy training as part of preparing for independence but often there are still gaps where additional help will be needed. Getting it right the first time will save a lot of time later on and support the young person’s confidence, so all young people should be helped to complete a budgeting form (Appendix 6) to ensure they are aware of what they need to spend, what they need to put aside for essentials and what their priorities are. All parties should be open and clear about what the expectations are, their rights and responsibilities and what help is available and how they can access it. A Young Person Tenancy Sustainment Officer can provide trauma informed and holistic support to the young person to ensure that they sustain their accommodation. This support can vary from support with welfare and benefits or support to engage with relevant services to overcome additional needs that the young person has.

When a care experienced young person faces a potential breakdown in their living situation, action should be taken quickly to identify what the issues are and ensure additional help and support is in place, making other services aware of the problems and getting targeted help to the young person quickly. Any threat of homelessness should be acted on immediately and the allocated officer should consider whether support from the HS Service could provide additional help for the young person. They should also consider whether their statutory duty to refer the case to the HS Service is also met. The Housing Caseworker performing the assessment will need a copy of the Pathway Plan, historic and sensitive information may be redacted at the request of the young person. Under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, Children and Adult Social Care are under a legal duty to refer cases to the HS Service where, in their assessment, the individual is either homeless or at risk of homelessness within the next 56 days. At Wiltshire Council, there is an easy email route to connect the allocated officer with the HS Service – they can email dutytorefer@wiltshire.gov.uk giving details about why they are referring the case, their contact details and also confirmation of consent to the referral from the young person. Wiltshire Council has a dedicated Young Person’s Housing Caseworker, and they will work closely with colleagues in the CIC team. The HS Service are happy to be involved before the case has reached this stage as part of its move to work on pre-prevention work to stop a young person even entering the homelessness process.

Living independently is challenging for all young people due to the high costs of living and their relatively low incomes and it can be daunting for some. Rent arrears in any form of tenure are a real risk and it is important that the signs that a care experienced young person is struggling are identified at an early stage. The allocated worker should be the eyes and ears, checking regularly with landlords rather than be surprised when things reach crisis point. They should also, where possible, seek to visit the young person at their home address to identify any additional support needs with how they are maintaining their property, whether they are keeping it clean and looking after the fixtures, fittings and furnishings.

Some young people may develop debt issues and it is important that they are referred to relevant debt advice services to help them manage their finances promptly. Cases that are more complex and are at risk of possession action will be taken to the multi-agency professionals meeting to agree joint action plans to try and prevent escalation of eviction proceedings.

No young person should be evicted from their home without it being clear what action has taken place to prevent this by all parties and what the subsequent plan is. When a young person aged between 18 and 24 approaches directly or is referred to the HS Service stating they are homeless, if it is known that they are a care experienced or the young person says they are care experienced, then the CIC Team should be informed as soon as possible, with consent from the young person.

**8.1 Local connection criteria for homelessness applications**

There are specific legal requirements in relation to local connection for care experienced young people owed leaving care duties under s23C of the Children’s Act 1989 will have a local connection to the area of the Children’s Services authority that owes them that duty. If the Children’s Services Authority is a county council, and not a housing authority, the young person will have a local connection with every housing authority district falling within the area of the Children’s Services Authority. Changes were brought in with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 given a young person a local connection with an area other than that where they are owed a care duty. A care experienced young person now also can claim a local connection to a local authority area in which they were normally resident for a continuous period of two years, at least some of which fell before their 16th birthday, as a result of being looked after by a local authority. This connection lasts until their 21st birthday. Where an approach is made to a separate local authority where the care experienced young person has no valid local connection, then the case will most likely be referred to Wiltshire Council for assessment. It is important to understand the rules around local connection to avoid wasting time in the young person securing assistance with an authority with no duty and to also manage their expectations.

**8.2 Homelessness**

A care experienced young person should never ideally reach the stage where a homeless application should need to be made. Following the guidance in this protocol should help reduce the risks of this but unfortunately, it may be necessary on some occasions when all other options have been explored.

Where there is a homelessness duty to assess a young person’s housing and other support needs and develop a personalised housing plan, arrangements should be in place to enable the PA to be involved in the assessment process and the development of a personalised housing plan, always with the young person’s consent. Any personalised housing plan should be informed by the young person’s pathway plan so it is important to share this at the earliest opportunity to ensure joined up working. The young person’s consent must be obtained but having their PA continue to be informed and involved in efforts to prevent or relieve homelessness is essential. The PA may also be requested to take actions to deliver the personalised housing plan, working with the young person.

Where a Housing Caseworker is concerned that a care experienced young person may not be co-operating with the required steps set out in the personalised housing plan, this should be shared as soon as possible with the PA to enable joint early action to remind the young person of the actions to be taken and the consequences of not doing so. Joint working to understand mitigating factors and resolve issues should continue throughout any action related to deliberate and unreasonable refusal to co-operate.

The HS Service’s role is to do all they can to either prevent the young person becoming homeless – known as the Prevention Duty – or, if that is not possible for whatever reason, to do all they can to relieve their homelessness by helping them to find accommodation. This is called the Relief Duty. Both duties will run for 56 days (the Prevention Duty can run for longer in certain circumstances).

All young people under 21 who were looked after between the ages of 16 and 18 and who are homeless are automatically considered to be in priority need of accommodation under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).

Young people aged 21 or more may be in priority need because of *“[vulnerability] as a result of having been looked after, accommodated or fostered*”. To determine whether a particular young homeless applicant aged 21 or over who was formerly looked after requires an assessment of their needs, circumstances and history by a Housing Caseworker. The Housing Caseworker compares the applicant with a hypothetical ordinary person in the same housing circumstances, an ordinary person who does not share the young person's characteristics. Factors that a Housing Caseworker considers specifically include:

* The length of time that the young person was looked after, accommodated or fostered
* The reasons why they were looked after, accommodated or fostered
* The length of time since the young person left care, and whether they have been able to obtain and maintain accommodation during that period
* Whether the young person has any existing support networks, particularly family, friends or a mentor

The Housing Caseworker will also consider whether they would be at risk of exploitation and take into account whether, if homeless, they would be at particular risk of exploitation, abuse or involvement in offending behaviour as a result of having been looked after, accommodated or fostered. It is vital, therefore, that the young person cooperates fully with inquiries and the CIC team provides the Housing Caseworker with as much background information as possible to support their assessment of the young person’s needs. The inquiries of the young person and the assessment which follow are not based upon their ability to manage whilst housed (support needs are a separate issue).

Where the HS Service have *reason to believe* that a young person is homeless and in priority need of assistance, Housing People Services will provide suitable temporary accommodation. Wiltshire Council will only place young people in a hotel as a last resort.

Where possible, Housing Caseworkers should do all they can to avoid the impact of intentionally homeless decisions in relation to care experienced young people aged 18–25. Where homelessness cannot be relieved within 56 days, Housing Caseworkers will need to conclude whether a young person has made themselves intentionally homeless from their last settled accommodation. To inform this assessment, housing authorities should consult with the CIC team and obtain professional advice and information as to the young person’s emotional and mental well-being, maturity, and general ability to understand the impact of their actions. Where there is a risk that a Care experienced young person may be found intentionally homeless, a case conference will be held between Housing People Service’s Head of Service/Service Manager and Children in Care’s Head of Service/Service Manager.

In either of these situations, the HS Service will normally only be required to accommodate them for a period of up to 28 days after making their decision.

If the care experienced young person is found to have an adverse decision on their homeless application, a copy of the decision letter will be shared with the CIC team and the PA should be invited to attend the “minded to“ meeting that the Housing Caseworker will offer the young person to explain their decision. The young person’s pathway plan should be updated in the event of an adverse decision and the CIC team should work proactively with the young person and the HS Service on looking at housing options following on from that decision.

If a Care experienced young person is identified as rough sleeping by the Council’s Rough Sleeper team during outreach, the team will provide trauma-informed and holistic support to the young person and proactively identify immediate ‘off the street’ accommodation options and suitable long-term accommodation pathways.

1. **Engaging with young people in using and developing this framework locally**

This framework brings together the best practice approach from CIC Team, P&S Service and the HS Service to ensure the housing needs of young people in Wiltshire are met but we are committed to hearing their voice too and being involved in helping decide what should go into this framework.

We always need to be upfront and honest with young people about the housing choices across the county because options are limited due to the housing crisis affecting the UK, but we also need feedback from young people about what works for them, what doesn’t and how we can improve things.

We will be committed to asking young people in care and those who have already left care:

* What does Wiltshire Council do well for those transitioning out of care?
* What areas could we improve upon from your experience?
* What do you see as the gaps in our service?
* What groups do you think need more help than others?
1. **Dispute Resolution and Escalation Process**

From time-to-time disputes will arise about areas of legislative decision making and other responsibility.

Communication between frontline professionals is key to achieve a shared understanding of each Service’s role and responsibility. Ensuring that open and transparent communication is maintained will help frontline officers understand the rationale behind decision making.

If frontline professionals are unable to resolve differences within 5 working days, the disagreement should be escalated to HS or P&S Team Leaders and CIC Team Managers.

If concerns remain unresolved, HS / P&S Service Manager and CIC Service Manager will meet to discuss the concerns and convene a joint professionals disagreements meeting with the front-line officers and Team Leaders/Team Managers.

Where Services are still in disagreement, the case should be escalated to the Director – Adult Social Care and Director – Families and Children.

**11. Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing this protocol**

HS Service, P&S Service, CIC Team and Child, Family & Youth Voice were all consulted during the creation of this protocol.

The Council’s Corporate Parenting Panel will be consulted prior to the protocol being implemented and the ongoing responsibility for this protocol with fall to Head of Service.

To ensure that it remains relevant and effective, this Protocol will be reviewed 6 monthly and after 2 years, annually. This is done to ensure that the protocol meets the needs of both CIC Team, P&S Service and HS Service in delivering the very best possible outcomes for young people and we know we might not get things right at the first attempt.

Children’s Social Care will initiate the review and will be responsible, alongside Housing colleagues, for the monitoring and evaluation of the Protocol. If there are any changes to roles and responsibilities, the Protocol will be reviewed, amended and agreed by all parties.

Organisations and services involved with this Protocol are asked to provide feedback and performance information that can be collated and shared to improve services and inform and support collective commissioning intentions in Wiltshire.

The Protocol can also help gather evidence to show, for example, the number of care experienced young people in Wiltshire who are at risk of homeless or in need of housing, and the number of care experienced young people whose tenancies break down. This evidence may highlight the need for new services and/or the remodelling or replacement of existing services. H-Clic data will be shared to allow for ongoing reviews to remain relevant and current.

**Appendices**

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**Appendix 1 - Care Experienced Independent Living Information**

This form has been designed to demonstrate the independent living skills that young people leaving care have developed to make a successful transition to a safe, secure, and affordable place to live. A move will support their success in achieving an independent and settled adulthood. It includes all relevant supporting information for the young person and their ability to successfully sustain a tenancy alongside their other successes. The form supports their application to join Wiltshire Council’s Housing Register. Please return this form to housingprofessionals@wiltshire.gov.uk, once completed.

|  |
| --- |
| **Personal details:** |
| **Full name** |  |
| **Preferred Pronoun** |  | **Gender** |  | **DOB** |  |
| **Preferrable contact** |  |
| **Email address** |  |
| **Personal Adviser contacts** (name, contact and email) | **Name** |  |
| **Number** |  |
| **Email** |  |
| **Team email** *(e.g., delete as appropriate)* | **CICTSouthAdmin@wiltshire.gov.uk** **/** **LACTeamNorthAdmin@wiltshire.gov.uk** |
| **Office number** *(e.g., delete as appropriate)* | **01722 438165 / 01249 707990** |
| **Health**  |
| *(e.g., include emotional and behavioural needs and undiagnosed conditions)* |
| **Finance**  |
| *(e.g., include ongoing support from Wiltshire Council as per The Promise)* |
| **Current Education, Training and Employment**  |
| (*e.g., part time, full time or apprenticeship; name of college*)  |
| **Accommodation**  |
| *(e.g., include information from past 5 years and reasons from moving on)* |
| **Independent Living Skills**  |
| **Skills** | **Status (*e.g., achieved/not achieved/ emerging)*** | **Ongoing support (*e.g., if needed and include narrative)*** |
| Money management and budgeting skills |  |  |
| Household management skills |  |  |
| Communication and interpersonal skills |  |  |
| Daily routine skills |  |  |
| Keeping safe |  |  |
| **Other Relevant Professionals** *(e.g., GP, Probation, YOT, CAMHS, ASC, Turning Point, Splitz, etc)* |
| **Name** | **Organisation** | **Contact details** |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Any Other Relevant Information** *(e.g., YP wishes and views, YP achievements, hobbies, interests, etc)* |
|  |

Young Person consent to this information being shared (delete as appropriate): Yes/ No

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Signature *(can be electronic)*** | **Date** |
| **Name of PA:**  |  |  |
| **Name of YP:**  |  |  |

**Appendix 2 - Immigration Restricted Care experienced young people**

Under the Children Act 1989, asylum applicants below the age of 18 who arrive in the UK without close adult family members, either accompanying them or already in the UK who they can join, may be provided with a service by Children’s Services, regardless of immigration status. This may be under s17 of the Children’s Act 1989 and therefore the young person may or may not be looked after or a former child as a result.

There may be uncertainty around a young person’s immigration status, particularly if they have claimed asylum, have UASC leave or are awaiting a decision on an immigration application. It is impossible for anyone to predict in which way claims or applications will be resolved. As a result, SWs need to plan for three possible outcomes for those turning 18. This is known as triple planning and should be part of their regular statutory planning through the care plan, pathway plan and review process.

Planning for three possible outcomes after reaching 18 involves: - equipping the young person to have a future in the UK if they receive some form of leave to remain in the UK past their 18th birthday, - preparing a young person to be returned to their country of origin either if they are refused an extension to remain in the UK and are being returned, or if they decide to return of their own accord, and - supporting young people who have been refused leave to remain in the UK and who have exhausted all appeals but are not removed.

**EEA citizens**

CIC Team have a role in ensuring that looked after children and care experienced young people, who are European Economic Area (EEA) or Swiss citizens, make an application to the EU Settlement Scheme. The UK immigration status granted to eligible applicants under the scheme will enable them to continue living in the UK after 30 June 2021, with the same rights and entitlements as they had before the UK left the EU.

The mandatory obligations on CIC Team supporting looked after children and care experienced young people include:

* To identify adequately trained resource to manage and make applications.
* To identify eligible children, including looked after children for whom the authority has parental responsibility, looked after children who are accommodated, care experienced young people and any other children in receipt of local authority support, for example children in need.
* To identify key signposting responsibilities towards each eligible child and put plans in place to ensure this signposting support takes place.
* To determine, for each young person the local authority has parental responsibility for, who will be applying online and which process to follow.
* To keep an adequate record of each application made, including the status granted and which email address and phone number were used, noting any memorable questions and answers in each case
* To record plans for monitoring the young person’s status, including future actions, with deadline, to be carried out, in order, where the young person is granted pre-settled status (where they have been continually resident for less than 5 years) to apply to convert this to settled status at the appropriate time and record this in the relevant pathway plan.

It is essential the information relating to the application is accessible in the event that anyone needs to check on the progress of the application and to ensure the digital status granted can be accessed.

Ensure records are kept of:

• The Unique Application Number (UAN) given when the application is made.

• The e-mail(s) and phone number(s) that were entered in the application form.

• The address that was entered in the application form.

• The answers that were given to the memorable questions at the end of the application form.

• The nationality of the child or care experienced young person.

• The status the child or care experienced young person was granted.

• The date that the child or care experienced young person can apply to convert their pre-settled status into settled status, and the date their pre-settled status expires (required only for those granted pre-settled status).

The EU Settlement Scheme guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/eu-settlementscheme-caseworker-guidance>

CIC Team should ensure that consideration is given to the child’s wishes and feelings and ensure that the child is aware of their right to access independent advocacy support.

Verifying the applicant’s identity and nationality is a key requirement of the EU Settlement Scheme. If a young person does not have a valid passport or national identity card (for EEA citizens) or a valid passport or Home Office-issued biometric residence card or biometric residence permit (for non-EEA nationals) confirming their identity and nationality, it is important that CIC endeavours to obtain a passport or national identity card for the young person from the authorities of their country of origin before an application to the scheme is made. The Home Office recognises that there will be cases where the applicant (or a local authority or health and social care trust acting on their behalf) is unable to obtain or produce the required identity document due to circumstances beyond their control or to compelling practical or compassionate reasons and can accept alternative evidence of identity and nationality in such cases.

Pre-application Checklist Please use the following checklist to help prepare young people to apply, or to help prepare others who need to apply, on behalf of a looked after child:

* Consider British citizenship. Is the child a British citizen? Could they apply or register for British citizenship? What’s in the child’s best interests?
* Consider the child’s wishes and feelings. All looked after children should be made aware their entitlement to independent advocacy support and the local authority or health and social care trust should facilitate this access where required.
* Gather identity document(s).
* Make an application for an identity document where there is none.
* Consider evidence of UK residence – usually this will be in the form of a letter by the local authority or health and social care trust confirming length of residence.
* Consider the paper application form route where a valid identity document cannot be obtained or produced.
* Record all key information to be accessed by the child or other carers in the future.

To discuss an application with the Home Office - [EU Settlement Scheme, Frontier Worker permit or Service Provider from Switzerland visa applications - Contact UK Visas and Immigration for help - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/contact-ukvi-inside-outside-uk/y/inside-the-uk/applying-to-continue-living-in-the-uk-including-settled-and-pre-settled-status/using-the-eu-exit-id-document-check-app)

**Appendix 3 - Care Experienced Young people leaving Custody**

Where a secure or flexible social housing tenant is imprisoned for a period of more than 12 months and would therefore either accumulate rent arrears or possibly lose their tenancy, they should voluntarily give up their tenancy unless they can make arrangements for the rent to be paid in their absence.

Care experienced young people due to leave prison are covered by the Duty to refer system by the prison and probation system and Wiltshire Council has a dedicated Criminal Justice Housing Case Worker who will work with their PA to look at appropriate move on options that avoid them being released from prison as homeless.

Children and young people in youth secure settings (young offender institutions, secure training centres, secure children’s homes and secure schools (once opened)) who are EEA citizens or family members of EEA citizens, may be eligible to apply to the EUSS. Youth secure settings should identify a designated EU Settlement Scheme lead (e.g., Resettlement Manager, SW or Caseworker) to coordinate application planning and provide oversight. The designated lead will need to ensure that children and young people who may, or may on their release, be eligible to apply are identified, their legal carers are alerted, and application plans are formulated in collaboration with relevant authorities.

Youth secure settings should also work with Youth Offending Teams, especially in preparation for that child or young person’s release to ensure there is a smooth handover of relevant details. Application progress or planning should be discussed during sentence. This will enable relevant information to be communicated to CIC Team upon release. This process should form part of that young person’s constructive resettlement agenda. If it is necessary for a youth secure setting to complete an application on behalf of the child or young person, the designated lead can complete an online application or support the individual to complete their own paper-based application. Although the child or young person’s parents should be involved in the application process, the child or young person can make their own independent application if they wish without parental consent. The child or young person’s application details should be recorded centrally as part of their review so that information remains easily accessible during establishment transfers, transitions to the adult estate and upon release.

**Appendix 4 - Wiltshire Council’s Online Tenancy Training**

**Homes4 Wiltshire: Procedure**

1. **Introduction**
	1. Pre-tenancy training is considered to be important for tenancy success, particularly for those with no or poor tenancy histories
	2. The online pre-tenancy training will give partner landlords greater confidence to grant tenancies to prospective tenants whom otherwise they might not be prepared to consider
	3. It is important to ensure that housing applicants in housing need whose independent living and tenancy sustainment skills require the greatest development undertake the online pre-tenancy training. Open Market Register applicants do not qualify to undertake the training
	4. The council has contracted with Virtual College for 1500 housing applicants to have online pre-tenancy training and needs to target the training to those in the greatest need (it receives approximately 9-10,000 online housing applications each year)
	5. Customers considered not to need the training, as it would duplicate council expenditure, are
* in supported housing and receiving tenancy training to prepare them for living independently
* receiving floating housing support services and receiving tenancy training to prepare them for living independently
	1. Customers completing the training will receive a downloadable certificate.
1. **Process in brief**
	1. To have the opportunity to undergo the online tenancy training, housing applicants will have a –
* Homes4Wiltshire account and
* Either have an active Housing Register housing application or be within 3 months of qualifying for the Housing Register e.g., PAUSE customers making repayments against their housing debts, offenders leaving prison
	1. Housing applicants to be selected to undertake the training are those whom it seems to an officer need to develop their independent living and/or tenancy sustainment skills and are either –
* Care experienced young people who have never held a tenancy, or
* Single young people aged 18-24 years who have never held a tenancy, or
* Other people who have never held a tenancy, or
* PAUSE customers, or
* People with an unsettled accommodation history in the past 5 years including people with a serious continuing mental health condition, people with a history of substance misuse and offenders, or
* People who have failed in one or more tenancy/ies
* have a current unmanaged housing debt or former debt
* were evicted for rent arrears, for anti-social behaviour or other tenancy breach
	1. Once the online training is completed, the housing application is marked so that prospective landlords, when performing pre-tenancy assessments, are aware that the course has been completed.

The training covers:

* Who are the main providers of social housing
* Who can apply for social housing
* How social housing is allocated
* Explain what a tenancy agreement is
* Understand your responsibility to pay rent
* Identify the different types of tenancy you may be offered

Once the course is completed, Care experienced young people should be able to understand:

* The importance of a basic bank account and the benefit of credit unions
* The different ways to pay your rent and the advantages of direct debits
* What benefits you may be able to claim to help towards your rent
* The importance of avoid debts and what to do if you struggle to pay the rent.
* Set up your utilities and get the best energy deal
* Obtain low cost or free furniture
* Arrange home contents insurance
* Make your home safe from fire
* Manage your tenancy and understand your responsibilities
* Why being a good neighbour matters
* How you can avoid falling out with your neighbours
* Why good neighbour agreements can help communities
* What landlords consider to be anti-social behaviour
* What landlords do about anti-social behaviour
* What can happen in serious cases of anti-social behaviour

**Appendix 5 - Joining the Housing Register**

**Initial housing needs assessment**

To be considered for the Housing Register, and get the opportunity to bid for advertised homes, we invite customers to make contact on 0300 456 0106. As Wiltshire is a rural county, we have made it unnecessary for customers to visit the council's offices to discuss their housing applications and there are no housing needs staff based at the council's offices. From 15 August 2022, it is no longer possible for any person to visit the council’s choice-based lettings website at [www.homes4wiltshire.co.uk](http://www.homes4wiltshire.co.uk) and make a housing application without speaking with a Housing Caseworker at the HS Service first.

The customer’s conversation with the Housing Caseworker focusses, in a strengths-based way, upon the current housing circumstances, the reason the customer wishes to join the Housing Register and what steps can be taken to improve the situation without a housing application being necessary. The Housing Caseworker advises the customer about whether, under the council’s Allocation Policy, the customer would be likely to be considered to have a housing need. If the customer wishes to make a housing application, the Housing Caseworker gives them a log in number and the customer has one month to visit the Homes4Wiltshire website and complete the online application. To ensure continuity, the Housing Caseworker continues to take responsibility for the particular case and assesses the housing need once the application has been made. The customer will have the officer’s name and email address for this purpose.

**Appendix 6 – Template Budget Planner**







**Appendix 7 - Letter concerning care experienced young person reaching 25 years of age without achieving independence**

Template letter to be used in the exceptional circumstance that a care experienced young person has remained in Children’s Services-funded accommodation until the age of 25 years.

Housing People Services to consider whether the history means that the young person’s needs mean that accepting that the housing need requires use of the emergency welfare or medical category in Band 1 to support the achievement of independent living. Officers considering the application have to determine whether they have lived independently at any point since reaching 18 years of age.

To: housingprofessionals@wiltshire.gov.uk

Dear colleague

**Care experienced young person reaching age of 25 years without achieving independence**

**[Insert full name, date of birth]**

I can confirm that I was the Personal Adviser for (insert name and DOB of YP) who was under the care of Wiltshire Council under (insert relevant section) of the Children Act 1989 from (insert CLA start date) to (insert CLA end date) and was classed as a care experienced young person under the Leaving Care Act 2000, until their 25th birthday when the local authority’s involvement ends.

Care-experienced young people may not be confident to live independently until 25 years or after for a variety of different reasons. Many have had difficult experiences in their past lives and advise social care colleagues that they are not ready. (insert name) has not sought to join Wiltshire Council’s Housing Register prior to their 25th birthday because (add reasons that, at no stage, the young person has been able to live independently).

Presently, (name) lives at (insert address) in (describe tenure) and this is likely to last until (insert rough timescale]. The customer’s NINO is XXYYYYYYX and their email address is (insert email address). Therefore, this letter is in anticipation of a future housing application to help housing colleagues understand the reasons that (insert name) has not sought to live independently before. It supports the need for the Band 1 Care experienced young person category when (insert name) joins the register for the first time.

(Insert name) is receiving support in relation to (insert details of the independent living skills being developed) to develop the skills to live independently in the future. They have achieved (insert achievements). The customer’s Independent Living form, as of today’s date, is attached. I am encouraging completion of the pre-tenancy training online course to support the learning.

For further information please feel free to contact the office number or email below.

Yours faithfully

(insert signature)

(insert PA name)

Personal Adviser

Telephone:

Email:

**Appendix 8 – Officer’s roles and responsibilities**

**Rough Sleeper Homelessness PA**

Overview of role:

* Supporting and liaising with PAs about young people who need more support for housing
* Support CIC Team’s understanding of the housing system, both the Housing Register (Homes4Wiltshire) and private rented sector.
* Liaising with HS Service to understand potential options/understand decisions which have been made.
* Attending Placement Panel / CLAD
* Direct support to young people to complete applications, to attend viewings and meetings required for future tenancy and to engage with support from housing, working with the Housing Officer and passing on information with consent.
* Practical support with the move when necessary – Particularly those who are out of county and require transport to get to their new tenancy.
* Completing wellbeing calls for young people who are in a crisis situation.
* Working with other local authorities to continue to support our care experienced young people to live in a location they prefer to be in.
* To advocate for the care experienced young person with professionals
* Contacting landlords to negotiate terms which suit both the landlord and the care experienced young person.
* Supporting the wider ‘Homeless Prevention’ Group across the nation with any queries/advice/contacts – sharing any resources and best practice ideas.

**Children’s Services Housing Caseworker**

Overview of role:

* Receiving service requests in relation to housing issues, housing need, homelessness
* Providing general housing advice
* Interviewing homeless persons and persons threatened with homelessness in relation to their housing and tenancy sustainment needs
* Determining the council’s duties under Part 7, Housing Act 1996 and, where required, undertaking prevention and relief work (Sections 175 and 189B respectively)
* Agreeing Personalised Housing Plans with homeless persons
* Issuing written decision letters notifying of the council’s duties under Part 7
* Attending meetings e.g., panel meetings
* Participating as necessary in early help discussions to ensure that young people do not become avoidably homeless

**Young Person Tenancy Sustainment Officer**

Overview of role –

* To provide holistic and trauma informed support in order to maximise tenancy sustainment.
* To avoid possession proceedings through advice and assistance in areas such as practical financial advice, money management and support on a wide range of issues including housing, benefits, training and employment and life skills.
* To provide support to Care experienced young people who are impacted by welfare reform and benefit changes. To support those affected to consider their options and apply for relevant funding or grants.
* To agree a support plan and identify key priorities to promote self-advocacy allowing them to manage and sustain their own tenancies.
* To support with engaging with substance misuse or health services to minimise all barriers stopping Care experienced young people from sustaining accommodation.