

Joint Housing Protocol for Care Leavers 2024/2025



PROTOCOL INFORMATION SHEET

Name of Document:	Joint Housing Protocol for Care Leavers
Purpose:	This joint protocol between housing services, children's services and other relevant departments sets out how we will deliver on our collective responsibility to provide appropriate accommodation and housing to care leavers and prevent homeless.
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Target Audience:	All staff in Children's Services and Housing
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Superseded document(s)	Not applicable.
Document Owner	Director of Social Care and Early help and Director of Housing Operations.

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1. Introduction

Corporate parenting means local authorities and partners doing their very best for looked after children and care leavers, to give them the same opportunities as other children and young people, to be aspirational for them and promote the best possible outcomes.

This Joint Protocol between Children's Services, Adult Services and Housing Services is the agreed response to Bury Council's statutory duties and roles and responsibilities in recognising the importance of working together to ensure our care leaving young people are well supported and able to access a range of housing and accommodation options and to prevent homelessness.

This joint protocol cuts across a Children's Services, Adult Services and Housing Services and therefore all practitioners and managers at all levels are expected to keep up to date with the content of this Protocol so they can apply it consistently in practice and provide a timely, consistent and coordinated response to care leavers that meets their needs.

The purpose of the Care Leaver Joint Protocol is an agreement between Housing Services (their partner housing providers, agents providing housing allocation, support, advice, and tenancy services) Adult Services and Children's Services. The protocol sets out:

is an agreement between Housing Services (their agents providing housing allocation, support, advice, and tenancy services) and Children's Services. The protocol sets out:

- Our commitment to strengthening services via the care leaver offer.
- Confirms the roles and responsibilities towards care leavers and defines the roles of the statutory agencies within the legislative framework.
- Develops a "corporate parenting" approach towards our care leavers, providing a shared commitment from Children's Services, Bury Housing Services, Adult Services and Revenues and Benefits to ensure our young people achieve the best outcomes possible.
- Identifies how Bury Housing Services (their agents providing housing allocation, support, advice, tenancy services and social tenancies) and Children's Services, work together, to meet the needs of care leavers, effectively discharging duties in line with government guidance and corporate parenting responsibilities.
- Ensures that council officers adhering to this protocol are fully aware of their role and responsibilities in working with care leavers and the need for a multi-agency approach to secure positive outcomes.
- Ensures that there are no gaps in services and that resources are effectively utilised.
- Ensures that care leavers are able to access suitable housing that enables them to thrive without the need to make a homelessness application.

Central to the protocol is our Corporate Parenting responsibilities and the main objective is to achieve sustainable long-term housing for Care Leavers and to avoid homelessness.

Bury Council and its partners are committed to delivering on its Corporate Parenting responsibilities. The Corporate Parenting Strategy 2024 - 2026 defines the role of Corporate Parent as:

'Corporate Parenting is the term used to refer to the responsibility of the council, to provide the best possible care and protection for children and young people who are 'looked after' and care leavers. At the core of this responsibility is the moral duty to provide the kind of support that any good parents would provide to their own children. This includes enhancing the quality of life and life chances of looked after children and care leavers as well as simply keeping them safe.'

The strategic priorities in our strategy have been determined by both local and national priorities for children in care and care leavers and through consultation with Bury children and young people.

They are:

- 1. Supporting engagement and achievement in education, training, and employment.**
- 2. Ensuring that our children in care and care leavers have stable and secure homes and sufficient support.**
- 3. Listening and responding to the voice of our children, young people, and care leavers.**
- 4. Ensuring that our children, young people, and care leavers are healthy and are supported in the physical and emotional wellbeing.**
- 5. Developing a Highly Effective Care Leavers Partnership and Strategy.**

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 sets out corporate parenting principles to be applied when supporting children in care and care leavers. In carrying out their functions, the local authority must have regard to the following needs:

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

It is important that there is effective joint working in supporting care leavers to navigate their way through the transition to adulthood. It is important that young people have a degree of choice in where they want to live, young people will be supported to make an informed choice in where they apply for housing, considering local connection and priority need principles (Part 6 and Part 7) (see Appendix 1.) This is especially important for those young people residing outside of the Bury and Greater Manchester area, ensuring they are supported in their decision to either stay in the area they are currently residing or return to Bury. When young people decide to stay in the area, they have been living the Personal Adviser will give them their full support to secure suitable housing.

Personal Adviser support care leavers up to the age of 25 years, whether or not the young are in education or training, which the care leaver should be encouraged to take up. Young people are deemed Former Relevant Care Leavers until the age of 21 years or until the young person completes the programme of education being undertaken on their 21st birthday. After the age of 21 years young can request support with education and training which can continue until the programme of education or training being undertaken on their 25th birthday is completed. Young people not undertaking education or training can continue to receive a service up to the age of 25, or cease and resume a service at any point they require.

2. Aims and Objectives of this Joint Housing Protocol

- 2.1 Good preparation for adulthood via Pathway Planning should support a gradual transition and flexible ongoing support is key to helping care leavers achieve a successful move to independent living. Bury strives to establish effective joint working arrangements between Children's Services and Housing Services and other specialist services to help care leavers prepare for the positives and challenges/realities of living independently, involve them in planning and decisions about their housing options and choices, ensure suitable housing and support is in place and are ready to respond with contingency arrangements if things do not go to plan. Transition to adulthood can be challenging and worrying for care leavers who have often experienced trauma and instability.
- 2.2 Securing suitable housing for care leavers is therefore much more than just finding somewhere to live. Care leavers should expect the same level of care and support that any responsible and loving parent would offer to their own child. As a 'Corporate Parent' we will make sure that our young people are provided with the opportunities and support they need. There is no single consistent pathway for young people to move to independent living and the views of young people will change and evolve. Care leavers, like all young people, will make mistakes and require support to learn from their experiences and may require second chance opportunities. Young people leaving care may need longer to achieve their aspirations and goals than young people who have not been in care and our response needs to be aware of this.
- 2.3 Good housing underpins success in all areas of life. Secure, safe, stable and affordable accommodation is an essential building block for integration in the community, success and achievement in education, employment and training, and has a direct impact on general emotional health and wellbeing. It is therefore essential that all departments and partners work together co-operatively to secure

accommodation for care leavers; agencies must work together to meet their statutory duties and corporate parenting responsibilities, to provide a safe and supportive pathway to independent living.

- 2.4 Care leavers need to be well prepared to live independently and their housing needs must be addressed before they leave care via robust Pathway Planning from 16yrs and through joint assessment. This protocol will ensure that every effort is made to avoid using a homelessness route/pathway which is inappropriate when assessing and meeting the housing needs of our care leavers.

3. Who does this protocol apply to?

- 3.1 Local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that all eligible and relevant Care Leavers have suitable accommodation/ housing when leaving care. The definitions are:

- **Eligible Child** - a child aged 16 and 17 who have been Looked After (in care) for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who are still Looked After (in care).
- **Relevant Child** - a child aged 16 and 17 who has been Looked After (in care) for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who has left care.
- **Former Relevant Child** - a young person aged over 18 who was previously 'eligible' or 'relevant'.

- 3.2 Where a 16 or 17 year old is looked after or deemed a 'Relevant' care leaver, Children's Services has the responsibility for the provision of a 'placement' or accommodation. This is also the case for all children looked after aged 16 / 17 years old. In situations where one of these groups of children/young people presents as homeless to a housing authority, they should be referred to Children's Services as the housing authority does not have a responsibility for this group as they are deemed the responsibility of Children's Services.

4. Legislative Framework and Statutory Guidance

This protocol considers the following legislation:

- Housing Act (1996) Parts 6 and 7, as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017;
- Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002;
- Children Act 1989;
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000;
- Care Planning Placement and Case Review Regulations and Guidance 2010 (Revised 2015 and 2021);
- Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers Regulations and Guidance 2010 (Revised 2015 and 2022);

- Sections 1,2 and 3 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017;
- Equality Act 2010.

This protocol considers the following Statutory guidance:

- 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 - [Children Act 1989: care planning, placement and case review - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations Volume 3: planning transition to adulthood for care leavers - [Children Act 1989: transition to adulthood for care leavers - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- Extending Personal Adviser support for all care leavers up to the age 25 years (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>
- Guidance on Intentional Homelessness For Care Leavers – [Intentional homelessness for care leavers: letter to local authorities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- Guidance on Developing Joint Protocols For Care Leavers - [Joint housing protocols for care leavers: good practice advice - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

5. Early Planning and Preparation

- 5.1 This protocol will primarily cover the journey for care leavers aged 16 years and over. Preparation and support during the transition to adulthood should start at 16 years old. Planning for beyond their time in care should be integral to the care planning process throughout a child/young person's time in the care of the local authority. Young people who are well prepared and supported through the transition will have greater resilience and be less likely to become homeless after they leave care.
- 5.2 A monthly **Post 16 Housing Pathways and Planning Meeting** attended by the Social Worker, Personal Adviser, Tenancy Sustainment Officer, Nominated Housing Officer and Adult Services and other professionals involved will take place to review planning for all Cared for Children from 16 years. A tracker will be developed to support effective planning and tracking of post 16 and post 18 plans and provide Housing and Adult Social Care colleagues with early information about young people who may be seeking a tenancy. This meeting will be chaired by Next Chapters Team

Manager and will report into the Corporate Parenting Board to offer assurance that the housing needs of young people Post 16 and Post 18 are being considered at the earliest opportunity and that effective planning is taking place.

- 5.3 By the age of 16 years and 3 months, all care leavers will have a Needs Assessment in place that sets out the advice, assistance and support they will need when leaving care. This should consider a young person's independent living skills, ability to manage own finances and their views and wishes to ensure they leave care at a time that is right for them, and an individual accommodation pathway suited to their needs.
- 5.4 As soon as possible after the Needs Assessment is completed the allocated social worker 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 helped to achieve them. The Pathway Plan will set out a contingency plan in case the proposed plan changes for any reason.
- 5.5 The Pathway Plan will be kept under review by the Personal Adviser and the Next Chapters Team Manager. Up until the age of 18 years, while they remain in care all young people will have an Independent Reviewing Officer whose role is to ensure the Pathway Plan is in place and sets out how a young person's needs will be met and how they will be supported to make a successful transition to adulthood. The Independent Reviewing Officer must ensure the plan reflects the young person's needs, young people are engaged in co-producing the plan, the plan is delivered in a timely manner and that the views, wishes and feelings of the young person are considered. Plans will be reviewed at Statutory reviews.
- 5.6 All care leavers will be eligible for support from a Personal Adviser from the age of 16 years until their 25th birthday (and beyond if undertaking education or training), this includes care leavers who return for support from the leaving care team after the age of 21 years.
- 5.7 The role of the Personal Adviser is to support young people to prepare to live independently and offer advice and support.
- 5.8 Foster Carers, Residential Placements and providers of semi-independent accommodation will need to support the young person to develop life independent skills, this will be a core component of the Pathway Plan to independence. Bury have developed a Pathway to Independence toolkit for use with young people but if providers have their own toolkit this must be consistent with the Pathway Plan identified needs. To ensure a joined-up approach the progress of the Pathway Plan to developing independence will be reviewed and monitored at each statutory review for children in care by the allocated Independent Reviewing Officer.

- 5.9 All young people from 16 years will be supported to access an 11-week Tenancy Readiness programme delivered by the Next Chapter Tenancy Sustainment Officer. The programme will be delivered from the Next Chapter Hub and timings will cater for young people in education, employment, and training. The Programme will cover topics such as tenancy management, being a good neighbour, budgeting and finances, basic cooking skills, maintaining a home, pet ownership, basic DIY skills, Attending appointments.
- 5.10 Children's Services must ensure all 'eligible' and 'relevant' (and 'qualifying' who are Cared For) young people in Bury Council's care are provided with suitable accommodation until their 18th birthday. The Next Chapters Team will continue to support young people to access suitable accommodation until their 25th birthday.
- 5.11 Young people who have been assessed under the Care Act 2014 ¹ as having a need for care and support, will be tracked by adult services from the age of 14 (service offer from age 18) onwards to ensure there is a smooth transition between services and appropriate support in place when the young person needs it.
- 5.12 All Bury children looked after reaching the age of 16 should be supported to join their Part 6 local connection housing needs register (Bury) as soon as possible after their 16th birthday and within 3 months at the latest. Where a young person becomes looked after following their 16th birthday, they should join the register within 3 months of becoming looked after at the latest. The responsibility for undertaking this task rests with the case holding Social Worker and will be monitored and tracked at the monthly Joint Housing Planning meeting. (see Appendix 2.)
- 5.13 The young persons allocated Social Worker or Personal Adviser will ensure, where appropriate all claims for benefits are submitted 4 weeks prior to the young person turning 18 years old. To avoid unnecessary delays the young person will need to have appropriate ID, bank account and National Insurance Number in place.
- 5.14 When a Bury unaccompanied asylum seeker (UASC) that is an eligible or relevant child reaches the age of 18-year-old, the local authority has the power to assist them as a Former Relevant Child to the extent that her/his welfare requires it, this includes the power to provide accommodation.
- 5.15 In assessing the need for accommodation, the Local Authority cannot of any accommodation that could be provided by the UK Border Agency (UKBA) as the UKBA are not required to provide accommodation if the asylum seeker (or failed asylum seeker) is entitled to accommodation under another statutory regime.

¹ [The Care Act 2014 Part 1 Assessing Needs](#)

- 5.16 UASC young people, will be supported to apply for settled status as early as possible to ensure no delay in their eligibility for public funds.
- 5.17 All Bury Care Leavers will be supported to access and understand Bury's Local Offer to ensure they know what support and services are available to them up until the age of 25 years old. This will start at the Initial Needs Assessment and be followed up at each review.

6. Risk and Vulnerability

- 6.1. Some young people may be engaged in offending, they may be a risk of harm to others and present with a high level of vulnerability to exploitation from others. The Youth Offending Service and Complex Safeguarding Service must always be consulted when a young person is open to their service and needs accommodation to ensure all risk factors are fully considered. This includes young people at risk of homelessness on release from a custodial setting. The highest priority is always to ensure a young person will be safe, and risk of harm to themselves and others is minimised by making sufficient checks to ensure that young people are placed in appropriate settings and communities. The same principal applies to young people who are at a high risk of missing and vulnerable to criminal and sexual exploitation.
- 6.2. A coordinated approach will need to be taken for those care leavers who are due to be released from custody. The allocated Personal Adviser will ensure they work closely with the prison, probation and youth offending services and housing teams directly and within the monthly Joint Housing Planning meeting on an ongoing basis and at least 3 months prior to release.

7. Accommodation and support options

- 7.1 Young people will be encouraged and supported to remain in positive, supportive care settings until they are ready to move on. We want to ensure young people are given the time to build up the skills and knowledge needed to live independently.
- 7.2 We will ensure that accommodation provided for care leavers is suitable for their needs. All accommodation placements will be based on a thorough assessment of the young persons needs which includes ascertaining his/her wishes, feelings about where they want to live and their aspirations.
- 7.3 **Staying Put** - Bury Council has a Staying Put Policy and offer for care leavers up until the age of 21 years, for those young people currently in a foster placement. The allocated social worker will ensure this option is promoted and fully discussed when the young person is being placed in foster care and at every review to ensure young people and foster carers understand what Staying Put is. The details of Staying Put arrangements can be found in the Staying Put Policy.

- 7.4 **Supported Lodgings** - Bury has a supported lodgings scheme and set of hosts which may be an appropriate option for some young people offering a balance between living in a family home and having increased independence and support that meets their needs.
- 7.5 **Semi-Independent accommodation** - There are a variety of supported accommodation providers in and around Bury. This can include a hostel, shared house or self-contained flat with in house or outreach support. Young people can stay up to 2 years before moving on to independent living. All referrals for young people under the age of 18 years are progressed via the children's commissioning team. Where it is recognised that a young person is not ready to move to independent living, but they are unable/do not want to remain in their current placement beyond the age of 18 year, their Social Worker will seek suitable semi-independent accommodation a minimum of 3 months before a young person's 18th birthday.
- 7.6 **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 within pathway planning.
- 7.7 **The National House Project (NHP)** provides support and expertise to local authorities across the country. Its primary focus is to set up and manage Local House Projects (LHPs). These projects aim to ensure that young people leaving care transition in a planned and supported manner, leading to connected and fulfilling lives. LHPs are co-designed with young people. The approach is cooperative, involving both adults and young people in and leaving care. Together, they create their first homes, build long-term support networks, and develop pathways into education, employment, and training. Please click on following link [The National House Project](#).
- 7.8 **Social Housing** - All young people who are assessed as ready for independent living will be eligible to apply for social housing. Care Leavers up to the age of 25 years will be afforded **Band 1 housing priority**. Because the waiting time for properties may be lengthy, Care Leavers will be able to register for housing and bid on properties from 17 years and 6 months. If a property is secured before the young person is 18 years old, they will not be able to take up the tenancy until they are 18 years and Children's Services will cover the rent in the waiting period. If the young person needs to move on from their current placement before a property is secured. For young people over the age of 18 years, the Personal Adviser will need to support the young person to complete a Housing Application Form and send direct to providers before applying for social housing, the allocated social worker or Personal Adviser will need to consider whether the young person understands the responsibility for managing their own tenancy and has completed Tenancy Awareness Training and have a local connection to the area they want to apply.

7.9 **Private Rented** - Another option to live independently is to rent privately from a landlord, this allows more flexibility in location and timescale. Accommodation can be found either through a letting agent, directly with a landlord or through arrangements put in place by Bury Council. To ensure the property is affordable, the allocated social worker or personal adviser will check the local housing allowance for the area <https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/Search.aspx>. Care leavers are eligible for the one-bedroom rate until their 25th birthday (and where they have spent 3 months living in a registered social landlord hostel/supported accommodation up to 35), where it will reduce to the shared room rate. The Pathway Plan needs to reflect this and outline what support will be available to the young person during this time

7.10 **University Halls/Vacation accommodation** - We have high aspirations for all our Bury care leavers, and wherever possible if this is the aspiration of the young person, we support them to progress to Higher Education. We want young people to reach their full potential and enjoy the full university experience. It is important that care leavers are supported to financially plan for university. Universities mainly offer accommodation in student halls or residence for the first year, and in some universities care leavers are able to remain in halls beyond year 1. Young people should be supported to fully understand the responsibilities they will have as a student with their own tenancy, such as through attending open days and liaising with student finance. Once a young person has been accepted onto a course the Personal Adviser will support them to apply for student finance and adhere to the established deadlines. The financial support that Care Leavers can access whilst at university is approximately £6,200.00 per year; some of these costs can be used towards housing which is highlighted in the Transition to Adulthood (Leaving Care) Financial Policy.

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. The Staying Put Policy sets out support arrangements in these circumstances.

7.11 **Adult Social Care** - Some young people's housing need will be met by Adult Social Care if they have care and support needs under the Care Act 2014. Where a young person has physical or mental illness or impairment, they may be eligible for care and support from the Adult Social Care under the Care Act. Eligibility is decided upon a national criteria that specifies that the young adult must be unable to meet at least two or more of their outcomes such as managing personal care, nutrition and hydration or maintaining a safe and habitable home environment. The impact on the young adults wellbeing must also be significant for them to meet eligibility².

7.12 Eligibility for services will be established by an assessment which will be carried out well in advance of them becoming 18 to ensure any services required are in place as they become adults as stated earlier in section 5.

² [The Care and Support \(Eligibility Criteria\) Regulations 2014](#)

- 7.13 Under the Care Act 2014, accommodation can be provided when it is directly related to the care and support needs of the individual. This is determined based on an individual's assessed needs and how the local authority decides to meet those needs. For example, when the young person's needs are complex and significant they may be met in a care home or very specialist supported accommodation. However, for most circumstances the young person's needs will be met in the young person's own home and therefore use of this protocol will still be necessary for most of those with care and support needs that are going to be met by Adult Social Care.
- 7.14 In exceptional circumstances when alternate suitable accommodation is not secured by the time of the young person's 18th birthday then a request will be made to the Director of Social Care and Early Help for an extension in placement, this will be reviewed regularly.

8. Homelessness

- 8.1 Young people leaving care are some of the most vulnerable in society. Without support many will struggle to adapt to independent life. One of the most common features of a poor transition to adulthood is housing instability, risk of homelessness and actual homelessness.
- 8.2 We must ensure we are fulfilling our 'Corporate Parenting' responsibilities and working together effectively, and much earlier to reduce the risk of homelessness and to prevent this outcome. Wherever possible, care leavers will be supported through the priority need, local housing allocations approach (part 6) and will therefore avoid using a homelessness or duty to refer approach. A duty to refer approach should only be used where the young person has to make a homelessness application, i.e. to an authority outside of Bury, or where they are at risk of losing their accommodation (i.e. social housing or private sector) after the age of 18 years. A referral to a local authority housing authority under the Joint Housing Protocol agreement for care leaver move on fulfils the requirements of the duty to refer. Personal Advisers should be ready to work with the local authority housing department to respond to any potential homelessness, and if the young person is likely to be evicted from their accommodation within 56 days, the responsible Personal Adviser should contact the local authority housing department where the move on process has been completed. Consent from the young person should be sought prior to a duty to refer – referral.
- 8.3 Following the referral, a **Joint Housing Planning meeting** will take place within 5 working days and plans and progress will be reviewed no less than every 5 working days. The meeting is to include the Personal Adviser, nominated Housing Officer and young person to look at how homelessness can be prevented or relieved. (Appendix 4 overview of Homeless Reduction Act 2017)
- 8.4 In all circumstances Care Leavers will be supported by Personal Advisers to make a homeless application when this is unavoidable. This should be the last resort.

- 8.5 Housing will complete Personalised Housing Plan with all young people who make a homeless application, and (with consent) shared with the Personal Adviser. The Personal Housing Plan should outline the reasonable steps that the local authority and young person will take to prevent or relieve homelessness. Subject to consent the Personal Housing Plan should be informed by the young person's Pathway Plan.
- 8.6 Every effort will be made to reduce the risk of and prevent homelessness, when this cannot be prevented and interim accommodation is required, the local housing team will work with the Personal Adviser to explore suitable temporary accommodation options inside of Bury before anything is considered outside of the border. This will be reviewed at the Joint Housing Planning meeting that will take place every 5 working days until the homelessness is no longer present.
- 8.7 As Corporate Parents we will avoid the impact of an intentionally homeless decision in accordance with the directive issued by Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities in May 2024. As such Care Leavers will not be made intentionally homeless due to the negative impact of such a decision on a young person.
- 8.8 When housing is considering discharging their temporary duty or when an 'intentional' decision is being considered, then a Joint Housing Planning meeting will take place between the young person, their Personal Adviser and housing officer following the 'minded to' letter being issued. Any decision to discharge temporary duty and to make an 'intentional' decisions will need to be considered and agreed by the following Head of Housing, Director of Housing Operations and the Director of Social Care and Early Help.
- 8.9 Bed and Breakfast accommodation for care leavers aged 18 to 25 years, should only be used in emergencies and for short periods³ Bed and Breakfast accommodation will not be used for any homeless 16 or 17-year-old.
- 8.10 Should homelessness not be able to be prevented or relieved, young people will be supported by the Personal Adviser to ensure the Homeless Assessment Team has all relevant information required to consider whether the young person is owed a full homelessness duty under the 1996 Act (S.184 decision⁴).

9. Key Involvements and Roles

- 9.1 The Care and Support Service (CASS) supports children and young people in care, until they reach the age of 18 years. The CASS Social Workers are responsible for all aspects of the young person's care plan, health, education, and future planning. When a young person is aged 15 years and 9 months pathway planning is started by their allocated social worker.

³ HRA Code of Guidance, Chapter 22, 22.27

⁴ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/section/184>

- 9.2 CASS is open Monday to Friday 09:00 – 17:00 Cass Duty: 0161 253 6666, cass.duty@bury.gov.uk Out of hours team; EDT 0161 253 6066.
- 9.3 At 16 years old, care leavers are allocated a Personal Adviser from the Next Chapter Team who will support them up to the age of 25 years. The Personal Advisers role is to build a relationship with the young person and ensure the Pathway Plan, is thorough and identifies the support they need to assist them as they transition into adulthood.
- 9.4 Children in Care have an allocated Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), they have a statutory role to ensure the local authority is meeting their statutory responsibilities and for ensuring Care Planning for young people is of a good quality and meets their individual role. The IRO has a duty to ensure an assessment of need is completed and a good quality Pathway Plan is in place.
- 9.5 Bury Children's Rights Service will offer advocacy support to children in care and Care Leavers ensuring young people are heard and are helped to say what they want, secure their rights, represent their interests, and obtain services they need. This may include representation on housing matters. Bury Children's Right service can be contacted via email at Burychildrensrights@bury.gov.uk and telephone on 0161 253 6339.
- 9.6 Care leavers will be allocated support from a Tenancy Sustainment Officer who is part of the Next Chapter team. The Tenancy Sustainment Officer will assist with developing skills to manage a tenancy as part of their transition and also to sustain their tenancies once a move to a home has been achieved. *Please see Tenancy Sustainment Criteria guidance in Appendix 1 and Tenancy Sustainment Referral form in Appendix 2*
- 9.7 The Council Housing Service will be engaged in the Post 18 Housing Planning meeting on a monthly basis, and they will assess the young person in accordance with the Care leaver Offer and allocate priority status in accordance with this protocol and the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme.
- 9.8 The Council Homelessness team will work proactively with Children's Services to avoid a Care Leaver becoming homeless and to put in place temporary arrangements when this is the only option. The working principle is we will not make a Care Leaver intentionally homeless or end a temporary accommodation duty without there being a forward plan in place.
- 9.9 Adult Social Care will assess and support a young person's transition to adulthood where they have care and support under the Care Act 2014.

10. Council Tax and Housing Benefit

- 10.1 Care leavers aged between 18 and 25 years and under a duty of care from one of Greater Manchester's ten local authorities are exempt from paying council tax. If there is a joint liability the exemption is for 50%. Children's Services will apply for an exemption or pay the council tax liability for those living outside of Bury, all exemptions and council tax support must be claimed, where there is a joint liability - 50% is paid. This is fully explained in the Finance Policy.

10.2 Support will also be offered to young people from their Personal Adviser when applying for rental costs via housing benefit or universal credit.

11. Emergency Accommodation

11.2 Consideration will always be given to the suitability of the accommodation for the young person. Bed and breakfast, hotels and nightly paid accommodation with shared facilities are not a suitable option for care leavers under 25 years and should only be used in exceptional circumstances and if necessary for short periods.

12. Rent arrears and debt management.

12.1 Rent arrears in any form are a risk, it is important that young people are identified at an early stage. Some young people may have multiple debts and it is important that they are referred to relevant debt advice services to help them manage their finances.

12.2 Support is available to young people prior to having a tenancy so they can manage their money along with one-to-one sessions to develop tenancy management skills. This can be accessed through a referral to the Tenancy Sustainment Worker.

12.3 Housing Service also have a Tenancy Sustainment and Support Team; if a Care Leaver is finding it difficult to maintain their tenancy the Tenancy Sustainment Worker in New Chapter Team will work alongside the Support Team at Housing to ensure a multi-agency approach is taken, especially when there are complexities around a young person and their life. Where appropriate Personal Advisers will assist young people to access Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP's) where a young person is experiencing temporary or transitional financial difficulties.

12.4 Young people can also be supported to access, signposted to, or referred to specialist debt management agencies such as, Citizen's Advice. Personal Advisers and the Tenancy Sustainment Worker will assist support with this.

13. Escalation and Complaints

13.1 The Bury Care Leaver Offer, outlines that Bury Council will not make a Bury Care Leaver homeless.

13.2 In exceptional circumstances a breach of tenancy conditions could lead to formal action being taken to end the tenancy. Usual eviction protocols will be followed and in Bury all housing services evictions will be considered at a Panel chaired by the head of housing. A **Joint Housing Planning meeting** will take place within 5 working days and plans and progress will be reviewed no less than every 5 working days. The meeting is to include the Personal Adviser, nominated Housing Officer and young person to look at how eviction can be prevented or relieved. The meeting will discuss individual circumstances and agree action plans around the young person to try and prevent escalation to any proposed eviction proceedings. A multi-agency response will be provided to resolve tenancy issues at the earliest stage to avoid difficulties and prevent homelessness.

14. Useful Links and further information

14.1 To ensure our care leavers have all the information they need, we set this out in the Bury Care Leaver's Local Offer. The document is a guide detailing all the services available for care leavers aged 16 - 25 years old. The purpose of the Local Offer is to give care leavers local information including advice and support, financial, welfare support, accommodation, housing, education, employment training, employment, staying healthy, accessing leisure activities and useful contacts.

- Corporate Parenting:
<https://www.bury.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=19100&p=0>
- Bury Council's Care Leavers Offer:
[Care Leavers In Bury | The Bury Directory](#)
- [Bury's promise to children and young people in care \[132kb\]](#)
- Homelessness charity; Mustard Tree:
<https://mustardtree.org.uk/>
- Centrepoin;
<https://centrepoin.org.uk/what-we-do/housing/manchester/>
- Shelter; homeless and housing charity:
<https://england.shelter.org.uk/>

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Local Connection

Part 6 Children looked after gain a local connection under part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 in the housing authority area where they lived at the point, they became looked after (i.e. settled accommodation with a parent or a person with parental responsibility). Children looked after or care leavers who are also Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) are allocated a local connection under Part 6 and Part 7 to their responsible Children's Services local authority. UASC do not have a formal local connection but become the responsibility of Bury Children's Service due to making an asylum claim in Bury, or due to being allocated to Bury via the National Transfer Scheme for Migrant Children as such this process allocates the Local Connection for Part 6 and Part 7. The Part 6 and Part 7 responsibilities take effect when the young person is granted a status that allows them to access public funds and services. A local connection under Part 6 enables care leavers to be given priority access to social housing via the local allocations policy (scheme) and process and therefore avoids the need to make a homelessness application (part 7).

Part 7 All care leavers who are the responsibility of Bury Children's Services also have a local connection under part 7 (homelessness application). Having a local connection under Part 7, allows young people to make a homelessness application (if they are homeless or will become homeless within 56 days). Wherever possible, Children's Services encourages young people to use their priority need access via Part 6 rather than via a part 7 homelessness application. Where a care leaver is placed outside of Bury prior to their 16th birthday, has lived in the same housing authority area for at least 2 years and is homeless or will become homeless within 56 days, they will also have a 'local connection' (under Part 7) and are eligible to make a homelessness application in that area (Part 7) as well as an application in Bury. Whilst a Part 6 application is likely to lead to a social sector tenancy, a Part 7 application may be discharged via a 6-month assured short hold private sector tenancy or the provision of a 6 months 'suitable accommodation' provision that meets the needs of the young person, this could be in a hostel or supported accommodation. In certain circumstances a Part 7 application may result in a decision that the young person is deemed intentionally homeless.

Appendix 2 - Joining the Housing Needs Register

All children looked after reaching the age of 16 should be supported to join their Part 6 local connection housing needs register as soon as possible after their 16th birthday and within 3 months at the latest. Whilst a Care leaver aged 16 can make an application under Part 6 the application would not be live, and the young person would be unable to bid as they cannot legally hold a tenancy. However, the date of application would be considered when the ready to move on documentation was submitted giving the young person Band 1 priority.

Where a young person becomes looked after following their 16th birthday, they should join the register within 3 months of becoming looked after at the latest. The responsibility for undertaking this task rests with the case holding Social Worker and will be monitored and tracked at the monthly Joint Housing Planning meeting. A Part 6 application will enable young people to access housing via the local housing authority allocations scheme and will allow priority access via choice-based lettings/the local allocations approach.

Where a young person is placed outside of Bury and reaches the age of 16, liaison should take place with the local authority housing department in the placed area regarding joining the local housing register and/or making a homelessness application should the young person chose to remain in the placed area at age 18. The primary aim of the approach is to avoid making un-necessary housing application and to avoid homelessness applications at or after age 18 years.

Documents required to complete the Housing Needs Register:

- One passport size photograph;
- One form of photographic identification (Passport, Driving License, Identity Card, Biometric Card);
- One form of identification (Birth Certificate, National Insurance Number, Bank Statement); •
- Two proofs of address (Letter from Local Authority on Headed Paper and other one other identity document);
- Proof of immigration eligibility (Biometric Card, Home Office Letter, Residency Card) – If Applicable;
- Proof of leaving care status and eligibility provided by letter from the local authority;
- The young person will also need an e-mail address.

The documents listed above must be collected in advance of completing the Housing Needs Register process and must be submitted with the application. In circumstances where the young person does not have a National Insurance Number they should still complete a Housing Needs Register application. It has been agreed that a hypothetical number can be used [AA 01 01 01 A],

Once the Housing Needs Register Application has been submitted, Social Workers must ensure the application has validated and authorised by the nominated housing

representative (confirmation should be sought via an e-mail). Once validated, the reference number and application date should be recorded in the young person's records and added to the Joint Housing Planning meeting tracker.

Supporting Letter to Confirm Child Look After Status and to Request Inclusion on the Housing Needs Register

Children's Services

Bury Council

Contact name:

Telephone no:

Email address:

Date:

Housing Needs Register

Dear Sir/Madam

Reference

Add Full Name, DOB, Placement Address and Address at Point of Becoming Looked After, Local Connection Housing Authority (and Host Housing Authority, if applicable).

I would like to refer ADD NAME for inclusion on your housing needs register as a looked after child/care leaver.

Legal status

A. (Add Full Name) is 'Looked After' by Bury Children's Services and is 'Accommodated' under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989.

B. (Add Full Name) is 'Looked After' by Bury Children's Services and is subject to a Section 31 Care Order under the Children Act 1989.

Delete A or B as applicable

(Add Full Name) is an A) 'Eligible' child, or B) a 'Relevant' child as defined by the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations and Guidance 2010 (Revised 2015) and Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers (England) Regulations and Guidance 2010 (Revised 2015).

Delete A or B as applicable

Current Accommodation/Placement

Add Full Name became looked after on Add Date and is currently placed in (Add Type of Placement).

Local Connection – Originating Authority

Add Full Name became looked after in Add Area and as such has a 'Local Connection' in your local housing authority area.

Local Connection – Host Authority

Add Full Name became looked after in Add Area and was placed in your area on Add Date and as such should be considered as having a 'Local Connection' in your local housing authority area.

Add Name and Contact Details of social worker/personal adviser who should be contacted if the housing authority / registered provider require additional information.

Social worker/personal adviser to set out the links and networks that the young person has established if placing on a 'host authority' register.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

(Add Name)
Social Worker

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Appendix 3

Tenancy Support Criteria for referrals of a Young Person Pre Tenancy Referrals: -

- Advice and guidance re: housing process
- Support and Guidance regarding housing applications and bidding (If not already in place from current placement and not engaging with PA)
- Support to manage and maintain Temporary accommodation (if concerns or previous history of failed placements)
- Tenancy Training Work
- Risk of eviction from current placement
- Early Support and engagement regarding housing needs for a young person with complex needs
- Early Support and engagement regarding housing needs for a young person who has previously failed tenancies (i.e., Castlecroft, temporary accommodation)

Post Tenancy Referrals: -

- Short Term support to set up tenancy – Housing costs, utilities etc
- Unmanaged Rent Arrears
- Unmanaged Debts
- Property Condition breaches
- Anti-Social Behaviour breaches
- Extra Tenancy Training required
- Budgeting Advice/Benefit Advice

If a young person is referred and the support required is for a longer term then a decision may be made to refer to Floating Support and not be opened and held by the Tenancy Support Worker.

If a young person is referred and the support determined is not predominately tenancy related then referrals to external agencies may be made and the young person case may not be supported by the Tenancy Support Worker.

Tenancy Support Referral Form

Name of Referrer and contact number		Date of Referral	
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Details of Young Person	
Name	
Address	

Date of Birth	
Contact Details Phone/Email	
English Speaking?	Yes/No
Interpreter required?	Yes/No Language
Any Disabilities or Impairments?	Yes/No
Details of all services known to be involved at this time (include team name, worker and any services they are receiving) e.g. PA/Social Worker	
Brief reason for referral	

For Office Use Only

Accepted as a case	Yes/No
If refused reasons	

Appendix 4.

Brief guidance to Homeless Reduction Act 2017(HRA)

The **Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA)** is a significant piece of legislation in England that aims to address homelessness more effectively. Here are the key points:

1. Threatened with Homelessness:

- [The HRA defines “threatened with homelessness” and places a duty on local authorities to provide advisory services to individuals at risk of losing their homes.](#)
- These advisory services help prevent homelessness by intervening early and offering support.

2. Assessments and Plans:

- Local authorities have a duty to assess all eligible applicants’ cases and agree on a personalized plan.
- [This plan outlines steps to prevent homelessness or secure suitable accommodation for those facing housing crises.](#)

3. Duties to Those Who Are Homeless or Threatened:

- When someone is threatened with homelessness, local authorities must take action to prevent it.
- [For those already homeless, the HRA imposes duties to help secure accommodation.](#)

4. Referral Obligations:

- Public authorities in England have a duty to refer cases to local housing authorities.
- [This ensures that individuals receive appropriate assistance and support.](#)

5. Codes of Practice:

- The HRA includes codes of practice to guide local authorities in fulfilling their responsibilities.
- [These codes provide practical guidance on implementing the legislation.](#)

6. Extent and Commencement:

- The HRA came into effect in April 2018, marking a fundamental change in England’s homelessness legislation.
- [It shifts the focus toward early intervention and comprehensive support for all affected individuals, not just those with “priority need” under the Act](#)

In summary, the Homelessness Reduction Act represents a crucial step in preventing and addressing homelessness, emphasizing proactive measures and holistic support for vulnerable individuals.

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Bury
Council