



# **Housing for Care Experienced Children & Young People (16-25)**

A corporate response – Bridgend Council

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30<sup>th</sup> January 2022

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## Introduction

All Welsh Councils including Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) have recently been tasked by Welsh Government to examine their corporate parenting response in relation to care experienced children and young people (CYP) and their future accommodation needs. Specifically, it requests that councils respond to the need for:

- An active identification process to ensure care experienced young people presenting as homeless can access all the support they are entitled to in cooperation with children's services.
- Multi-agency reviews to be undertaken to identify any gaps within the system or interventions that could have taken place to ensure future similar cases are prevented for care experienced young people presenting as homeless;
- Granting 'local connection' status for care experienced young people who are placed out-of-county, when moving on;
- Extending Personal Adviser support up to the age of 25.

To enable BCBC to consider its future response to the needs of care experienced CYP the following activities were undertaken in January 2022:

- A desktop appraisal of existing and emerging policy
- A desktop appraisal of good practice
- A facilitated workshop with BCBC housing and social services managers
- Self-assessments in relation to joint working and joint commissioning
- A review of previous work undertaken for BCBC in relation to homeless 16 & 17 year olds.

## Key Findings & Information

### Existing and emerging policy

The last 6 years have seen significant changes in the Welsh legislative and policy landscape relating to young people at risk of homelessness, in a context where both Housing and Homelessness are identified as top priorities within the current Welsh Government Programme for Government.

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

### **The Housing Wales Act 2014 (HWA 2014)**

The HWA 2014 requires local housing authorities to work alongside other public authorities and voluntary sector to ensure that services are designed to meet the needs of groups at particular risk of homelessness – including young people.

#### **Duty to Collaborate**

Section 60 of HWA 2014 requires local housing authorities to work alongside other public authorities and the voluntary sector to ensure that the service is designed to meet the needs of groups at particular risk of homelessness. Such groups include people leaving prison or youth detention accommodation and young people leaving care.

#### **Duty to Prevent Homelessness**

The emphasis on prevention in the HWA 2014 is supported by a number of programmes and policy areas such as the Housing Support Grant Programme, the Social Services & Wellbeing Act 2014, The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 and Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014.

## The Social Services & Wellbeing Act 2014

The current legal and policy framework for looked after children and care leavers in Wales is primarily drawn from the Children Act 1989 and the Children Leaving Care Act 2000. Support currently offered to care leavers in Wales includes: structured pathway planning from care to independence; the right to a personal advisor; and support to find suitable accommodation and access education and training.

The Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA 2014) – places a greater emphasis on ensuring services are more person centred, promoting independence and reducing reliance on more intensive services. One of the SSWBA 2014 National Wellbeing Outcome Areas – covers the suitability of living accommodation.

*'I live in a home that best supports me to achieve my wellbeing'*

Section 37 contains the duty to provide care and support for a CYP in the local authority's area if s/he has an eligible need for care and support. These include the powers to accommodate and support the CYP's carers and other family members.

## The Southwark Judgement

In May 2009, the House of Lords made a landmark judgement in the case of R (G) v London Borough of Southwark 57 which affects how local authorities provide accommodation and support for homeless 16 and 17-year-olds. The judgement ruled that:

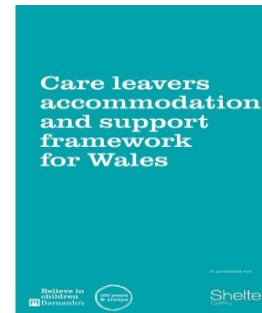
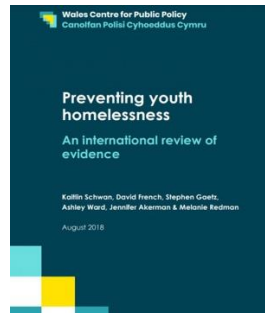
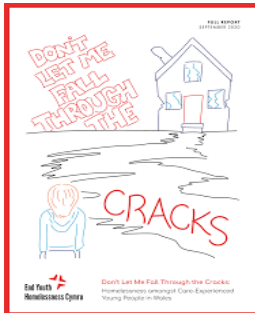
- the primary duty to a homeless 16 or 17-year-old is under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, and the ongoing duty to accommodate and support that young person will fall to children's services. This will include the range of support available as a looked after child and a care leaver.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

## The Programme for Government

The Programme for Government outlines key commitments to legislate in line with the key recommendations in the documents below in relation to homelessness and care experienced young people. Specifically Welsh Government has committed to:

- Explore radical reform of current services for looked after children and care leavers;

- Fundamentally reform homelessness services to focus on prevention, rapid rehousing and;
- Support innovative housing developments to meet care needs
- Improve joint working across housing and social services, utilising corporate parenting responsibilities



More details on the policy context and legal framework are available in Annex 1 in this [link](#).

## Good practice

[The Care leavers accommodation and support framework for Wales](#) (Appendix 1)

outlines several good practice examples in line with the five areas below

- Prepare for reality of housing options
- Plan young people’s accommodation and support options with them
- Reduce housing crisis
- Access housing and support as needed
- Access and successfully manage longer-term move on options and support options

### Specific good practice examples that might be of interest to BCBC in relation to multi agency approaches

Project	Details
Getting Ready	A collaborative project between Children in Wales, Voices from Care Cymru and three local authorities in Wales (Ynys Mon, Carmarthenshire and Rhondda Cynon Taf), Getting Ready seeks to support young people as they prepare to leave the care system, with a focus on considerations around delaying leaving care and reducing the risk of homelessness and housing instability.
MyST	MyST (My Support Team) is a multiagency partnership working to help children who are looked after to remain in their local communities. It works seamlessly across statutory agencies to provide an effective alternative to residential care for children who are looked after with highly complex needs. MyST is commissioned by the Gwent Children and Families Partnership Board. This service is already established in Torfaen and Caerphilly and will be regional across all of Gwent by 2021. They are included in this report due to their focus on a multi-agency approach, which connects all elements of what they refer to as a child’s ‘ecosystem’.



## Joint working and joint commissioning in BCBC

Two self-assessments were carried out in a workshop with managers across housing and social care in relation to joint working and joint commissioning. The following actions are proposed from the self-assessments and merged with relevant actions proposed previously in relation to a BCBC protocol for homeless 16/17 year olds:

### Action Plan

Area for action	Actions
Corporate outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop a corporate parenting strategy that explicitly outlines how BCBC will plan for future accommodation needs for care-experienced CYP</li> <li>▪ Put in place a learning and development plan to support to include all key partners to ensure strategy is understood at both strategic and practice levels</li> </ul>
Commissioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop a joint commissioning strategy between housing and social care</li> <li>▪ Map existing accommodation/costs/criteria for accessing - to inform the strategy</li> <li>▪ Ensure good information flow and proactive information from social services for CYP in care with more complex challenges</li> <li>▪ Develop a coherent joint move-on strategy</li> <li>▪ Ensure development priorities are aligned and complementary</li> <li>▪ Ensure flexibility in funding arrangements</li> <li>▪ Ensure youth offending teams are involved in commissioning and planning for CYP being released - around short-term accommodation options</li> </ul>





Area for action	Actions
Joint working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A joint protocol needs to be established for care leavers, building on the existing protocol for 16-17 year olds in BCBC.</li> <li>▪ Joint assessments should be timely and collaborative</li> <li>▪ Re-establishment of a proactive multi-agency panel that focuses on care experienced young people with more complex situations</li> </ul>
Projecting need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Agree a corporate suite of data that provides an intelligent projection of future needs</li> <li>▪ An information, advice and accommodation pathway for looked after young people aged 14+ should be considered</li> </ul>
The experience for young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure all services that CYP access are psychologically informed – to include locations, buildings and practice across housing and social care</li> <li>▪ Consider developing a separate physical hub for young people presenting as homeless</li> <li>▪ Develop a proactive programme of prevention and early intervention for young people at risk of homelessness. The following activities should be streamlined:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pre-crisis education</li> <li>▪ Early advice</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## Appendix 1: Care Leavers accommodation and support framework



Supporters	Framework stages and options				Activity and approach
Carer/residential worker Personal adviser Housing worker	<b>1. Prepare for reality of housing options</b>				Identify and plan with young people on the framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leaving care 16-18 and 18+</li> <li>Leaving custody</li> <li>Out of authority</li> <li>UASC/NRPF</li> </ul>
	Tenancy and life skills training schemes	Education including peer and from carers	Preparation for leaving custody		
	<b>2. Plan young people's accommodation and support options with them</b>				Involve young people in decision making and offer housing and support choice
	Training flats	Visit housing types	Family group conferencing for returns home and leaving custody	When I'm Ready	
	<b>3. Reduce housing crisis</b>				Plan early and have contingency plans in place to prevent crises from escalating
Respite/short breaks	Staged exits from care	Short-term placements from custody	Family mediation		
<b>4. Access housing and support as needed</b>				Commission a range of housing and support options with access for care leavers	
<b>Short-stay/Emergency</b> Nightstop Short breaks Respite Short-term supported lodgings Emergency assessment bed	<b>High support</b> Small units 24/7 Small group homes Specialist supported lodgings Housing First	<b>Medium support</b> Floating support Specific accommodation leased by local authorities	<b>Low support</b> Shared houses with floating support Peer landlords On-call concierge		
<b>5. Access and successfully manage longer-term move-on and support options</b>				Develop a range of move-on options Work with landlords to reduce evictions Work with partners to develop a range of housing options	
Suitable shared and self-contained options	Mixture of tenancy types available	Affordability checks and preparation	Support as needed to set up and sustain tenancy		

- Underlying principles – young people are:**
- given a much information choice and control as possible
  - able to make mistakes and never 'fall out' of the framework
  - helped to succeed
  - offered flexible support that adapts to meet their needs
  - offered supportive and unconditional relationships
  - the shared responsibility of their corporate parent.

