Welcome to this Practice Week session

Please be considerate to others - we want this to be a safe, open and reflective space to learn and share thoughts and ideas.

You can turn on live captions on by clicking on the 3 dots at the top of your screen if you need this.

Please be aware that some of these sessions are being recorded. Your presenter will let you know at the start of the session. If you do not wish to appear on the recording, just keep your camera off.

Thank you!



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Safe, Secure, Settled: Housing and It's Role in Safeguarding

Presented by Childrens Services Housing Support Team



Agenda

- **Why settled housing is important?**
- **16–17-year-olds and options for settled housing**
- **Safe and suitable housing for families**
- **18+ year-olds and options for settled housing**
- **Housing rights for Care Leavers**
- **Case study**
- **Our role**
- **Q&A**



Introduction

What is settled housing and why is it so important?

“Housing is absolutely essential to human flourishing. Without stable shelter, it all falls apart.”

– Matthew Desmond

16/17-year-olds at risk of homelessness

What do we mean when we are talking about homelessness?

Being homeless means a young person does not have a permanent or safe place to live. It includes sofa surfing, staying with friends, or sleeping on the streets.

A young person is **not** homeless because they do not like that their parent/carer wouldn't let them have a party and so they want to move out…

If it is safe, it is important that 16- and 17-year-olds remain living at home where possible

Homelessness or leaving home should be a last resort

What other options can be explored?

Why?

There is a lack of provision for 16/17 year olds in Norfolk

None of these places are able to offer emergency accommodation.

Mixed ages, children can be placed with adults. This may increase vulnerability to other factors and/or lead to adultification.

Location

If a young person is truly homeless or at risk of homelessness, the joint protocol for 16- and 17-year-olds should be followed

It is our job as professionals to ensure young people know their rights and options in line with the Southwark Judgement

Any young person who is homeless or at risk of homelessness should..

- Receive the leaflet on 16/17 year old homelessness containing written information about their rights and options
- Have access to an independent advocate if they would like one
- Have their options explained to them.
- Have the opportunity to ask questions and discuss with their network/or those supporting them.
- Professionals should ensure young people have the capacity to make an informed choice about their accommodation.

Young people do not have to be sleeping rough to qualify as homeless. Sofa-surfing, being told to leave home, or living somewhere unsafe can all count.

Children's Services should establish:

- Where the young person is currently staying.
- Whether they have somewhere safe to sleep that night.
- Why they cannot remain at home.
- Whether there is abuse, neglect, exploitation, domestic violence or family breakdown.
- Whether there are immediate safeguarding concerns.

If the young person has nowhere safe to stay, emergency accommodation should be considered while their needs are assessed, and professionals ensure the young person understands their options.

Word Cloud

What accommodation options are available for homeless 16/17-year-olds?

Emergency accommodation?

Norfolk Nightstop provides emergency accommodation for young people aged **16-24** who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness and need a safe place to stay in a crisis.

Initially this accommodation can used for a period of 5 nights but can where appropriate and safe this can be extended to 10 nights.

They are basic rooms with shared facilities.

Children's Services or Housing can refer to NightStop.

NightStop will only usually accept referrals from young people who are low/medium risk.

Young people can choose to remain supported under a Section 17, or they can request to become looked after under a Section 20…

Section 17 – Child In Need

- Under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, the local authority assesses whether the young person is a child in need and a social work assessment will be carried out. This will explore the young persons wider welfare and developmental needs.
- Limited number of providers – all use a referral process.
- Usually, providers will only accept young people who are medium/low risk.
- B&B, hotel or nightly let accommodation with shared facilities are not suitable for any 16 or 17 year olds.
- If accommodation cannot be found then a S20 discussion may need to be revisited.

Section 20 – Looked After Child

- They become a looked-after child.
- They receive a care plan.
- Their accommodation is subject to looked-after child standards and regulated by Ofsted. This may be an in-house or external provider.
- They receive appropriate social work support.
- They may become entitled to care-leaver support when they turn 18.
- There are also pressures in S20 accommodation and placements can be hard to find.

Word Cloud

What factors could make housing unsafe or unsuitable for a family?

Domestic Violence

- Families can ‘flee’ and present to any local housing authority and access emergency accommodation or a refuge on the day if required, or this could be a managed move
- The refuge or LHA will support the family to obtain permanent safe and suitable housing
- The family can access financial support for their emergency accommodation and existing tenancy at the same time if they are claiming Universal Credit



Overcrowding

- Each LHA has their own overcrowding policy
- The bedroom standard is widely used, which suggests who should and should not be sharing a bedroom
- When a family meet the criteria for being overcrowded, the LHA should allow the family to re-join the social housing register, according to their allocations policy. Mutual exchange and private rent can also be explored.
- Families cannot complete a mutual exchange and often cannot have priority banding due to overcrowding if they have rent arrears.



Reasonable adjustments cannot be made for medical requirements/accessibility

- The LHA should be contacted to report unsuitability to see if criteria is met, if adjustments can be made or if grants can be applied for
- If the home cannot be adapted and it is agreed that it is unsuitable, the LHA should support exploration of Mutual Exchange, Private Rent and priority banding should be awarded



*Certain criteria/thresholds will need to be met when working with Local Housing Authorities for a property to be deemed unsuitable

Damp, mould and structural issues

- These should be reported to local authorities immediately
- A surveyor/repair team member will undertake a home visit and complete an assessment
- Treatment/repairs should be undertaken in a timely manner but wait time is dependent on risk level
- Emergency accommodation should be provided if it is unsafe to occupy
- The family will be expected to remain in or return to the property if deemed safe by the LHA



*Certain criteria/thresholds will need to be met when working with Local Housing Authorities for a property to be deemed unsuitable

Rent unaffordable

- Welfare Rights referrals can be made to ensure that the family are receiving all that they are entitled to
- Budgeting interventions could be undertaken. Could the rent be affordable if costs were reduced elsewhere? Are housing costs being prioritised?
- Alternative housing options can be explored, such as downsizing, social housing and alternative private rented options



*Certain criteria/thresholds will need to be met when working with Local Housing Authorities for a property to be deemed unsuitable

Barriers that families may face to accessing suitable, safe housing

- Intentionally Homeless
- Debt/Arrears
- Antisocial behaviour
- Limited knowledge of rights, options or of where to access to support
- Not having a guarantor or meeting the financial threshold for private rented accommodation
- Limited housing stock

Preventing unsuitable housing where we can

- We should increase knowledge of expectations, rights and responsibilities and consequences, and offer early intervention, e.g., around budgeting
- Temporary housing is an often unsafe and always unsuitable housing option for children and should only be used when absolutely necessary
- CS Housing support team can support in helping families to maintain their tenancies and explore managed moves where appropriate



- In 2023/24 **over 100k young people** (16-25) were identified as **homeless** in the UK, including **12k** in the East of England.
- In 2024, it was estimated that **165k children** in the UK are living in **temporary accommodation.**
- At the end of March 2024, it was estimated that **16.7k families** had been in **temporary accommodation for 5 years+**
- In 2023/24, £2.29bn was spent by LAs on temporary accommodation in the UK.
- **1.33m families** are on the waiting list for **social housing** (2024)
- In the past 5 years temporary accommodation has been cited as a contributory factor in the deaths of 74 children (including 58 under 9)
- During 2024/25 **163 Care Leavers in Norfolk became homeless**

Word Cloud

What accommodation options are available to young people who are leaving care at 18?

Post 18 Accommodation

Accommodation pathways for post-18 care leavers across Norfolk are governed by the **Joint Protocol** for the **Provision of Accommodation for Care Leavers in Norfolk**, agreed between Norfolk County Council (NCC) and the seven housing authorities (Breckland, Broadland, Great Yarmouth, King's Lynn & West Norfolk, North Norfolk, Norwich City, and South Norfolk).

Post 18 options

Type	What it is	Positives
Extended Placement Options	**Staying Put** (Foster Care): An eligible young person has the right to remain with their foster carers post-18 until age 21.	Stability while pursuing education, employment, or independent living preparation.
Supported & Semi-Independent Living	**Semi-Independent Supported Housing**: Hostels, , shared supported housing, and self-contained units with on-site or floating support (e.g., YMCA, Aspire). Referrals post-18 are processed directly via the Housing Application Form (HAF).	Placements can last up to 2 years while building independence skills.
Social Housing (Part 6 Housing Act 1996)	**Priority Banding / Move-On**: Care leavers assessed as ready for independent living (evidenced via the Journey to Independence toolkit and tenancy awareness) receive priority banding across all seven Norfolk district allocation schemes.	**Exemption from Local Connection Qualification**: Authorities are strictly prohibited from disqualifying care leavers under age 25 for lack of local connection. Care Leavers have a statutory local connection to every district council in Norfolk.

Post 18 options

Type	What it is	Positives
Private Rented Sector (PRS)	**Independent Tenancies**: Private tenancies sourced directly or via letting agents with Leaving Care Team assistance.	**Financial Guarantees & Rent Deposit Scheme**: NCC Leaving Care Services provides deposits and rent in advance. **Local Housing Allowance (LHA) Exemption**: Care leavers qualify for the self-contained one-bedroom LHA rate until their 25th birthday, exempting them from the shared accommodation rate.
Higher Education & Specialist Transition Routes	**Higher Education & Vacation Accommodation**: Children's Services must provide suitable vacation accommodation (or funds to secure it) for care leavers in full-time HE. **Adult Social Care / Preparation for Adulthood Lives (PfAL):** For young people with eligible care and support needs, coordinated transition begins at age 17 into supported living, shared lives, or specialized residential care. **Family & Friends Reintegration**: Reconnection supported via Norfolk's Family Networking Service or Family Group Conferencing.	Under Norfolk protocol, NCC funds and pays a contribution to rent to retain settled social/housing association or private rental tenancies while studying away.

Post 18 options - barriers

Type	Statutory & Financial Barriers	Operational & Systemic Barriers
Staying Put & Staying Close	• Foster carer loses fostering fees; allowance relies on Housing Benefit/UC.	• Carer reluctance due to substantial income drop. • Placement capacity conflicts with fostering new foster children. • **Purely relational**: lacks security of tenure if relationship breaks down.
Supported Living	• **Excluded license status**: low security of tenure; summary notice to quit.	• High-density shared schemes expose vulnerable youth to exploitation.
Social Housing	• Severe county-wide deficit in 1-bedroom social lets. • Bidding delays undermine planned transition. • Registered Providers impose pre-tenancy affordability caps and demand upfront rent.	• Gatekeeping via 'tenancy readiness' tests • Unlawful district pushback demanding localized connection contrary housing legislation
Private Rented Sector	• **Broad rental deficits**: LHA rates do not meet real open-market rent cost. • (landlord sale/move-in) permit eviction after 12 months.	• **Rent Guarantor barriers**: Commercial letting agents reject no Guarantor • **High competition**: care leavers routinely outcompeted by dual-income or mature tenants.

Post 18 options - barriers

Type	Statutory & Financial Barriers	Operational & Systemic Barriers
Higher Education & Specialist	• **Risk of tenancy loss**: students pressured to surrender social tenancies while at university. • LA reluctant to accept CL with high support needs due to tenancy failure and PFAL not wanting to support young person with placements due to hight eligibility criteria.	• Administrative bottlenecks between Leaving Care. • Lack of adapted or specialist accommodation for care leavers with complex trauma/neurodiversity.
Statutory Homelessness	• Overuse of Bed & Breakfast contrary to the Homelessness Code of Guidance. .	• Trauma of emergency accommodation causing disengagement and PHP compliance failure.



Preparation for post 18 accommodation

1) Pre-Tenancy Training & Life-Skills Workshops

•Your Own Place & District-Led Tenancy Workshops (e.g., South Norfolk & Broadland). These cover rights, practical tenancy conditions, property upkeep, utilities management, and community integration.

•Care leavers frequently face eviction from interim accommodation or supported housing due to house rule infractions, non-payment of unsupported service charges, or property misuse. Early workshop intervention directly targets these failure points before an accommodation crisis arises.



Preparation for post 18 accommodation

2) Financial Education, Budgeting & Multi-Agency Social Work Teams

•Direct Cause of Tenancy Breakdown: Mismanagement of money and personal allowances is the single largest driver of care leavers losing temporary or supported housing, leading to rent arrears and risks of adverse stress.

•Social work teams and Personal Advisers must carry out structured financial capability assessments as an integral part of the statutory Pathway Plan.

•Ongoing Budgeting Support: Joint protocols require 8-weekly budgeting reviews between the Personal Adviser and the young person once housed, tracking utility payments, service charge liability, and living costs to avert arrears before formal recovery action begins.



Preparation for post 18 accommodation

3) Housekeeping, Practical Tenancy Upkeep & Property Standards

•Property Care & Waste Management: Failure to maintain cleanliness, address condensation, or dispose of household refuse correctly leads to licensing breaches, Community Protection Warnings, or eviction notices.

•Inspection Readiness: Pathway planning must incorporate hands-on housekeeping practice, covering minor maintenance, meter readings, heating system operation, and managing shared spaces in supported lodgings or foyer provision.



Preparation for post 18 accommodation

4) Formal Evidencing Tools: "Journey to Independence"

•The Stepping-Stone Framework: Norfolk's Road to Success (ages 12–15) and Journey to Independence (age 16+) toolkits serve as the primary evidentiary basis for assessing independent living readiness.

•Cross-Agency Recognition: Under the Norfolk Joint Protocol, completion of the Journey to Independence toolkit is reviewed at every statutory Looked After Child (LAC) review by the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO).

Preparation for post 18 accommodation

5) Universal Credit Transition at Age 18: Eliminating Payment Gaps

28-Day Advance Preparation

To prevent an income gap on the 18th birthday which frequently causes immediate rent arrears pre-claim documentation must be completed up to 28 days in advance:

- Current biometric ID, passport, or Home Office status papers, Active bank account in the young person's sole name, Verified National Insurance Number (NINO), Pre-drafted tenancy verification letters for accommodation providers.

Day 1 Claim Submission & Alternative Payment Arrangements (APAs)

The Universal Credit claim must be submitted on the exact date the young person turns 18 to establish the earliest possible assessment period.

Managed Payments Direct to Landlord (APA): Because care leavers are recognized as highly vulnerable under DWP Tier 1 guidelines, Personal Advisers must request an Alternative Payment Arrangement (APA) at the point of claim. This routes the housing costs element directly to the landlord or supported housing provider, removing the risk that living allowances are mistakenly spent on subsistence rather than rent.

Council Tax Exemption: Simultaneously, the PA must lodge an application for the statutory Care Leaver Council Tax Exemption, ensuring the billing authority exempts the care leaver until their 25th birthday.



349 4

Amount of social housing lets across Norfolk
from April ‘25 – April ‘26

9721

People are on the housing register in Norfolk (July ‘26)

Care leavers have legal rights to housing support to help them move successfully into adulthood and reduce the risk of homelessness. Local authorities have a responsibility to ensure that care leavers are provided with the support, advice, and accommodation they need to live safely and independently.

Right to Suitable Accommodation

•Accommodation should be safe, suitable, and meet the young person's needs.

•Housing should take into account education, employment, health, support networks, and any vulnerabilities.

•Young people should not be placed in accommodation that puts them at risk.

Right to Housing Advice and Support

•Help to find and maintain accommodation.

•Support with understanding tenancy agreements.

•Guidance on housing options and homelessness prevention.

Priorities for Care Leaver Housing

Right to a Pathway Plan

The Pathway Plan should include:

•Current housing arrangements.

•Future accommodation plans.

•Support needed to maintain accommodation.

•Contingency plans if accommodation breaks down.

Right to Financial Support

Care leavers may be entitled to:

•Setting-up-home grants.

•Help with deposits and rent in advance.

•Essential furniture and household items.

•Advice on budgeting and benefits.

Rights of Care Leavers: Key Messages

Right to Homelessness Assistance

- Care leavers aged 18-20 automatically have a priority need if homeless.
- Local authorities must assess housing needs and provide support.
- Housing and Children's Services should work together to prevent homelessness.
- **Right to Ongoing Support**
- Support from a Personal Adviser until at least age 21, and up to age 25 if requested.
- Help with tenancy sustainment.
- Assistance if accommodation is at risk of breaking down.

Corporate Parenting Duty

Local authorities should act as a good parent would by ensuring care leavers have:

•Safe accommodation

•Stability

•Practical support

•Opportunities to succeed

Case Study

- **Family with multiple children who had left their home following a relationship breakdown. Local housing authority found them intentionally homeless from their previous address.**

What did we do?

- **Supported the family to request a review of the decision, advocating for them.**
- **Explored the families circumstances and any other possible options available to them**

What happened?

- **Referred to supported accommodation and found a match, supported the family to move into this property where they will receive on-going support.**

What is the role of the Housing Support Team?

We can support care leavers and families by:

- Listening to their views and aspirations
- Promoting independence
- Advocating for their rights
- Preventing homelessness
- Creating a safe base so that other goals can be achieved – e.g employment and education – maintaining tenancies/preventing repeat homelessness
- Building resilience and confidence



Questions

Please provide some feedback - it only takes a minute!

