



Children, Education & Safeguarding Committee

20 March 2023

Title	Family Services Quarterly Update
Report of	Chair of the Committee, Councillor Coakley Webb
Wards	All
Status	Public
Urgent	No
Key	No
Enclosures	Appendix 1 – Barnet Joint Care Leaver Housing Protocol Appendix 2 – Barnet Joint Housing CSC Protocol for Homeless 16 & 17 year olds
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Summary

This report gives an update on the Barnet Care Leaver Housing Protocol that outlines how Barnet Homes, Family Services, Revenues and Benefits and other key agencies each play a full role in providing the resources and support to care leavers to support a successful transition to independent living.

This protocol sets out Children's Social Care and Housing Options joint procedure for responding to 16/17 year old homelessness. It covers what will happen from the point young people present asking for help to longer term support arrangements.

Officers Recommendations

1. That the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee is asked to note and provide comments on the Barnet Housing Protocol for Care leavers and the Barnet Joint Housing and Children's Social Care Protocol for Homeless 16 & 17 Year Old's as summarised in this report and Appendix 1 & 2.

1. Why this report is needed

- 1.1 As part of the ongoing service development and partnership working Family Services has work with Barnet Homes to review the Care Leaver Housing protocol and the Homeless 16 & 17 year old protocol to ensure it is representative of developments within the service areas and any changes in legislation.
- 1.2 In relation to the Care leaver protocol, it was important for the protocol to reflect the changes and progress made for care experienced young people's housing options and improvements made to simplify and support them through the application process as they become adults.
 - 1.2.1 Care experienced young people should expect the same level of care and support that others would expect from a reasonable parent. Barnet Council is responsible for their care and should make sure that they are provided with the opportunities they need. It is important to remember that there is no one appropriate pathway for young people to move to independent living. Leaving care too early presents looked after young people with significant challenges which will impact on their life chances. Care experienced young people, like all young people, will make mistakes and require support to learn from their experiences. Young people leaving care may need longer to achieve some of their goals than their peers who have not been in care.
 - 1.2.2 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 accommodation for care leavers; agencies must work together to meet their statutory duties and corporate parenting responsibilities, in order to provide a safe and supportive pathway to independent living.
 - 1.2.3 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 and joint assessment. We are therefore proud to publish this protocol and will ensure that Barnet Homes, Family Services, Revenues and Benefits and other key agencies each play a full role in providing the resources and support to care leavers.
 - 1.2.4 This protocol will also ensure that every effort is made to avoid using the homeless route which is inappropriate when assessing and meeting the housing needs of care experienced young people.
 - 1.2.5 This joint housing protocol for care experienced young people is an agreement between Barnet Homes (and their agents providing the homeless/housing advice services), Family Services and Revenues and Benefits.
- 1.3 When a 16- or 17-year-old is seeking support because they are homeless or threatened with homelessness, housing services and children social care will pro-actively work with young people and their families to identify and resolve the issues which have led to the homelessness crisis.
 - 1.3.1 Barnet Family Services will always strive to find ways to help young people remain living with their families by ensuring they have access to early help services that focus on rebuilding their relationships with their parents/carers or exploring other members of the family who might be able to offer the security of a stable home into adulthood.
 - 1.3.2 The joint housing protocol for homeless 16 & 17 year olds sets out Early Help,

Children's Social Care and Housing Options joint procedure for responding to 16/17 year old homelessness. It covers what will happen from the earliest point of need to the point young people present asking for help and longer term support arrangements.

- 1.3.3 All young people placed in emergency accommodation under s20 Children Act 1989, and those at risk of imminent homelessness who remain living at home or with a safe family member/friend, will have a full assessment of their needs. All assessments are undertaken jointly with the Housing Options team who will assess what duties are owed to the young person under Part VII, Housing Act 1996. The joint assessment will identify the needs of the young person and how best to respond to these needs.

2. Reasons for recommendations

- 2.1 N/A

3. Implications of decision

3.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 3.1.1 Family Friendly is a key driver of our corporate planning with the vision of "Creating a Family Friendly Barnet, enabling opportunities for our children and young people to achieve their best".

3.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

- 3.2.1 There are no resource implications.

3.3 Legal and Constitutional References

- 3.3.1 Legislative Framework specifically relating to the Care Leaver Housing Protocol

The *Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000* and *The Homelessness Act (2002)* require local authority Family Services and Housing departments to work together to ensure the accommodation needs of care leavers are met.

Volume 3 of The Children Act (1989) - The Planning Transition to Adulthood guidance (2010) states that research and practice shows that young people who have been looked after will have the best chance of success as adults if those providing transitional care and other support take the following principles into account in talking to the young person and when making any decision:

- ☐ Is this good enough for my own child?
- ☐ Providing a second chance if things don't go as expected.
- ☐ Is this tailored to their individual needs, particularly if they are more vulnerable than other young people?

The Housing Act 1996 as amended states that a YP who is threatened with homelessness, has a priority need for housing if they are a person:

- ☐ under 21 who was (but is no longer) looked after by the Local Authority between the ages of 16 and 18.
- ☐ A person 21 or over who is vulnerable as a result of being looked after.

The *Homelessness Reduction Act (2017)* places a new duty on Local Authorities to help prevent the homelessness of all families and single people, regardless of priority need, who are eligible for assistance and threatened with homelessness.

3.3.2 Local authorities have specific duties in respect of children under various legislation including the Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004. They have a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need in their area and, if this is consistent with the child's safety and welfare, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families by providing services appropriate to the child's needs. They also have a duty to promote the upbringing of such children by their families, by providing services appropriate to the child's needs, provided this is consistent with the child's safety and welfare. They should do this in partnership with parents, in a way that is sensitive to the child's race, religion, culture and language and that, where practicable, takes account of the child's wishes and feelings. Under the Children and Families Act 2014, local authorities must consider how the child or young person can be supported to facilitate their development and to help them achieve the "best possible educational and other outcomes".

3.3.3 Local authorities have specific duties to care leavers under the Children Act 1989 as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017. The corporate parenting duties and powers under the 1989 Act include:

- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;
- to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
- 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;
- to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
- for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and,
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living

3.3.4 The Council's Constitution, Article 7 notes that the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee has 'Responsibility for all matters relating to children, schools and education.'

3.4 Insight

- 3.4.1 Family Services uses a comprehensive suite of performance information to support decision making, including local and regional datasets, audit and financial analysis. This together with insight developed through research and performance information from Barnet Homes has informed the housing offer for care experienced young people and homeless young people.

3.5 Social Value

- 3.5.1 All commissioning activity includes social value as a standard monitoring item.

3.6 Risk Management

- 3.6.1 Specific risk management is being carried out for Children and Young People's Plan. Any Family Services risks are recorded on the Family Services Risk Register and monitored each quarter by the Senior Leadership Team with escalations to CMT if necessary.

3.7 Equalities and Diversity

- 3.7.1 The 2010 Equality Act outlines the provisions of the Public-Sector Equalities Duty which requires Public Bodies to have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
 - advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups
 - foster good relations between people from different groups
- 3.7.2 The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day business and keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the delivery of services
- 3.7.3 Equalities and diversity considerations are a key element of social work practice. It is imperative that help and protection services for children and young are sensitive and responsive to age, disability, race and ethnicity, faith or belief, sex, gender reassignment, language, maternity / parental status and sexual orientation. We continue to closely monitor this, as report appendixes notes, in our performance data.

3.8 Corporate Parenting

- 3.8.1 In July 2016, the Government published their Care Leavers' strategy Keep on Caring which outlined that the "... [the government] will introduce a set of corporate parenting principles that will require all departments within a local authority to recognise their role as corporate parents, encouraging them to look at the services and support that they provide through the lens of what a reasonable parent would do to support their own children.'
- 3.8.2 The corporate parenting principles set out seven principles that local authorities must have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to looked after children and young people, as follows:
- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and

well-being, of those children and young people;

- to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
- 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;
- to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
- for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and;
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

3.9 Consultation and Engagement

3.9.1 Engaging and hearing the voice of young people is central to the service development within Barnet Family Service and is governed by the My Say Matters Strategy.

3.9.2 In revising the Care Leaver Housing Protocol, young people from the Care leaver forums were consulted. There was regular engagement with BOP (Children in Care Council) and the Strengths and Resilience Group at Onwards and Upwards.

3.10 Environmental Impact

3.10.1 N/A

4. Background papers

None