

**Prevention of homelessness and provision of accommodation
for 16- and 17-year-old young people, who may be homeless
and/or require accommodation**

Updated May 2024

Values and Principles

The fundamental principle of this protocol is to support young people to remain at home in the care of their parents or wider family and friends' networks, wherever this is possible.

We recognise that homelessness is damaging to young people's personal, social, economic development and well-being. Where possible homelessness should be prevented, and all relevant services will ensure a clear focus on enabling young people to be supported to remain at home (where safe to do so). Evidence shows that it may take much longer to work through significant family tensions and problems while the young person is accommodated by the local authority.

Preventative work to reduce the risk of homelessness for young people will be undertaken by MASH, Early Help, Duty, Locality Children's Social Care, Homeless Team and the Engage Service. This will be done alongside a statutory assessment of need for 16- and 17-year-olds who may be homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Where remaining at home is not safe or appropriate, it is important for young people to leave in a planned and supported manner. In such instances, we recognise that young people should be with other responsible adults in their wider family and friend's network.

Where young people remain at home or return home, we recognise that some issues may remain unresolved. Therefore, we understand the importance of post-reunification support for the family after the young person returns home.

Context

Joint guidance by the Department for Education (DfE) and Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) was first published in April 2010. This followed a number of judgements handed down by the House of Lords, in cases concerning the interrelationship between the duty under section 20 of the [Children Act 1989](#), and duties under Part 7 of the [Housing Act 1996](#), where young people aged 16 or 17 require accommodation.

The most recent guidance issued in April 2018 by the DfE and MHCLG has been amended to reflect new duties introduced through the [Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](#). Case law has clarified the relationship between the duty under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 and duties under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 - in the case of 16-

or 17-year-old young people, who require accommodation.

The House of Lords Case [R \(G\) v Southwark \[2009\] UKHL 26](#) held that, where a 16 or 17 year old is owed duties under section 20 of the 1989 Act, this takes precedence over the duties in the 1996 Act in providing for children in need who require accommodation. Where the specific duty is owed under section 20 of the 1989 Act, a 16- or 17-year-old should be accommodated under that provision rather than looking to the general duty owed to children in need and their families under section 17 of the 1989 Act.

The full Government Guidance for the provision of accommodation for young people aged 16 and 17 years can be found below. The guidance includes all other relevant legislation which must be used alongside.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/provision-of-accommodation-for-16-and-17-year-olds-who-may-be-homeless-and-or-require-accommodation>

Whilst the Children Act 1989 duty takes precedence, Housing Services may have duties towards a young person aged 16/17 who is or may be threatened with homelessness within 56 days. Housing Services can play a critical role working alongside Children's Services to try and prevent homelessness from occurring and resolve issues within a family.

16- and 17-year-olds who are homeless or threatened with homelessness are likely to be vulnerable and will often be at risk of harm in the absence of intervention. Safeguarding and promoting their welfare should be central to service provision. If there is any concern that a child may be suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm then local safeguarding procedures must be followed.

Parallel planning and intervention between Rotherham Children's Services, the Homeless Team and Engage Team is essential to prevent young people becoming homeless. All attempts should be made to support a young person to remain in the care of their family, or connected person, keeping children and young people safe and where necessary providing accommodation.

Introduction

Through the joint working arrangements of Children's Services (CYPS), the Homeless Team, the Engage Team and other agencies including the Youth Justice Service (YJS), this joint protocol sets out Rotherham Council's vision for meeting the needs of young people aged 16 and 17 years old where they are at risk of homelessness. Rotherham Council aim to prevent young people from becoming homeless, recognising that it is in the best interests of children and young people to remain within their family or family networks.

It outlines a response to 16- and 17-year-olds at risk of homelessness which is coordinated between CYPS, Engage team, and Homeless team.

CYPS will lead on the response to young people at risk of homelessness, working in partnership with Homeless Team, registered social landlords, housing related support services, the Early Help Service, the Youth Justice Service, and other identified partners. The aim of the response is to ensure, wherever it is safe to do so, that 16 and 17 year olds remain within a family setting until they are ready for a planned move or, if that goal is not appropriate or achievable, to secure a range of suitable accommodation and support options for young people where their needs can be met and they can develop the skills to live independently and move on into training education or employment.

This protocol establishes the principle that all professionals involved with young people will need to work together, in a coordinated and timely way, to deal effectively with young people who have accommodation needs. The focus of work will be on preventing crisis and the need for emergency accommodation/placements wherever possible, by maintaining and/or securing safe and appropriate accommodation with family members in a family setting. Where accommodation is identified as a need in the short or medium term then this will be sourced in a planned and supported way by a range of services working with the young person and their family.

The joint protocol will ensure that through the appropriate assessment, decision-making and delivery of services, the needs of homeless 16- and 17-year-old young people are appropriately met whilst fulfilling statutory duties under the legal framework.

The benefits of having a joint protocol are:

- To provide young people with the support to address problems and to experience a timely and coordinated response to their needs so that homelessness can be avoided now and in the future.
- To keep families together wherever possible and support families to find their own solutions.
- To prevent children and young people from needing emergency accommodation. Where accommodation is required, this should be carefully planned.
- To ensure that young people have access to the most appropriate accommodation and support services to prevent housing need impacting on their wider needs for education employment and training.
- That young people are helped at the earliest and most appropriate stage of their housing pathway.
- Avoiding the use of unsuitable housing for 16- and 17-year-olds such as bed and breakfast and hotel accommodation.
- A clearer understanding of the roles and responsibilities for workers, wider agencies, and young people.
- A reduced risk of young people being let down by any agency and therefore becoming at risk of exploitation, rough sleeping, and other safeguarding risks.
- To make the best use of limited resources and professional expertise.
- To create a single point of access for 16- and 17-year-olds, and their families or carers, requiring support around housing and accommodation issues.

This protocol covers all 16- and 17-year-olds presenting to any agency in Rotherham as homeless or at risk of being homeless within 56 days, including, but not exclusively limited to the following circumstances.

- Situations in which parents or carers are unable to continue to offer care or accommodation as a result of disability, illness or death.
- Situations in which parents or carers are no longer prepared to allow their child to live with them due to relationship breakdown, which in itself can arise for different reasons often including challenging behaviour of the young person.
- A young person leaving custody who has nowhere to live on their return to the community.
- Situations in which a young person is made homeless because of bail conditions arising from offending.
- Situations in which a young person cannot live at home due to them being assessed as posing a risk e.g. to younger siblings.
- Where the young person is placed at risk by factors within their current accommodation which cannot be safely managed.
- Those aged 16 or 17 that have formed relationships and/or have children themselves, who become homeless or are threatened with homelessness. Therefore, our assessment, support and accommodation services will take into account young people's relationships as well as any dependent children. We will also plan for any contingency where those relationships may break down.

Types of accommodation

In circumstances where 16- and 17-year-olds cannot remain with their family or family networks, CYPS and Homeless Team will provide accommodation, which is suitable and of a good standard, including a range of accommodation that is suitable for 16- and 17-year-olds, who cannot live within their family network. The type of accommodation will be factored into assessments of young people's needs. These include:

- Supported housing.
- Properties with visiting tailored to the young person's needs.
- Other types of supported accommodation.
- Foster care.
- Children's residential homes.

[Section 23\(2\)\(f\)\(i\) of the Children Act 1989](#) permits local authorities to make such other arrangements as seem appropriate when they place a child in care. This provision offers scope for Children's Services to ensure that they are able to make appropriate provision with support tailored to the needs of the young person for those homeless 16- and 17-year-olds who they accommodate, and are in care, but for whom fostering, or a children's home placement would not be the most suitable option.

Pathway – access to the service

This protocol allows joint work and assessments to be undertaken by CYPS and Homeless Team to assist young people aged 16 or 17 years old, that are homeless, or at risk of being homeless.

When a young person, aged 16 or 17 years old, presents as homeless, or at risk of being homeless, professionals should be very clear of their responsibilities to ensure the young person receives the correct advice regarding their circumstances. It is very important that they are not needlessly passed between services of the Council.

The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is the team which will deal with all young people, who are not open to social care, presenting as, or at risk of, homelessness. They will undertake robust screening to determine if a young person is homeless or has the potential to be homeless within 56 days. Young people who are at risk of family breakdown will not necessarily always be considered to be at risk of homelessness. There will be times when the Engage team will assist with the screening process.

If a young person is determined to be at risk of being made homeless, the case will progress to the Duty Team, where a social worker will be allocated to working with the young person. A referral will also be made to the Engage Team who will work jointly alongside the allocated social worker to prevent a young person from needing to leave the care of their family.

In cases where a 16- or 17-year-old is already open to social care, the allocated social worker will lead on the initial response. In these circumstances MASH will not need to be involved in the process, though may be contacted to determine who the allocated social worker is if required.

If a young person is open to Early Help and is presenting as immediately homeless, MASH should be contacted to progress a referral to Duty. Where a young person has the potential to become homeless within 56 days, the step-up process should be utilised to Duty via MASH. All young people deemed to be homeless or at risk of homeless within 56 days must have an allocated social worker to undertake a joint assessment.

The allocated social worker will refer to the Young Persons Homeless Prevention Officer (YPHPO) based in the Homeless Team, who have expertise on homelessness prevention, housing options and the homelessness legislation, who will work jointly on preventing homelessness and assessing young people with staff from Engage and wider CYPS staff.

The allocated social worker, Engage worker and the YPHPO will immediately work jointly to start to understand and address the underlying problems or issues that may be causing the young person's housing issues by undertaking a joint assessment of need. This is a joint assessment which brings together: the S17 Child in Need assessment and the homelessness assessment - the S184 decision on eligibility and homelessness/threat of homelessness as well as the S189A assessment of housing

needs, circumstances, and support needs. The duties owed by Housing cannot be confirmed until the outcome of the child in need assessment is known. Child in Need assessments should aim to be progressed within ten working days, though there will be situations when this will need to be extended. Child in Need assessments must be completed within 45 working days of the referral being made.

Any 16- or 17-year-old at risk of homelessness and presenting to another agency in the district or any other part of the Council during normal office hours should be immediately referred to the MASH on 01709 336080. Where 16- and 17-year-olds are already open to social care, the allocated social worker or team will then be contacted directly.

Young people presenting as homeless outside of office hours will be directed to the Emergency Duty Team (EDT) on 01709 336080.

Statutory guidance where 16/17-year-old present as homeless who ordinarily resides in another local authority:

Where 16- and 17-year-olds present as homeless in Rotherham, when they ordinarily reside in another local authority, the duty to assess can fall upon Rotherham Children's services. This would be dependent on the individual circumstances for a child. It should be established the reasons for a young person seeking help in Rotherham, rather than their 'home' district and determined if it is possible for the young person to return.

Rotherham Children's Services must make contact with the local authority in which a young person ordinarily resides to determine if they are open to that local authority and negotiate with that authority to take over the assessment of the young person's needs, so that the young person is assessed in a familiar setting close to their family and friends. It should also be determined if the local authority where a young person resides can enable a child to return to their family.

Disputes about responsibility for the young person must not get in the way of Rotherham responding to a young person's immediate accommodation needs if matters cannot be resolved when contacting another local authority where a young person ordinarily resides.

The Homeless team may choose to refer applicants who are homeless and eligible for services to another housing authority under certain circumstances. Referrals can only be made if the person does not have a local connection to the area they have applied to; they do have a local connection in the area they are to be referred to; and they would not be at risk of violence or the threat of violence in the area they are referred to.

In order to ensure that decision making is informed by relevant information, the Homeless team should seek consent to discuss a referral with another authority with relevant children's services, in both the area of housing services and in the area they are minded to make a referral to. The children's services team undertaking the child in need assessment should be consulted prior to any decision to refer a homeless 16- or 17-year-old to another district to ensure that due consideration is given to their

safety and welfare.

Pathways – assessment and outcomes

If the presenting young person is at risk of becoming homeless in the future, it will be for the allocated social worker, Engage worker and YPHPO to determine what support is required - depending on the circumstances and the needs of the young person and their family. This approach will usually involve a joint visit home visit by a social worker, Engage worker and the YPHPO to the young person and their family to discuss preventing an immediate crisis, whether there is a need for the young person to go temporarily to another family member or friend, as long as this is safe and suitable, or, if these options are not available, then an emergency placement for a short period of time initially.

Discussion and information will be provided to the young person and their family about what realistic and planned housing options might be available in the short and medium term. This approach may “slow down” an impending crisis that could lead to homelessness and facilitate a more planned move for the young person into suitable accommodation at a future date.

In order to prevent relationships breaking down in the family resulting in the young person leaving or being asked to leave, the Engage worker and YPHPO will offer support and mediation to help empower the young person and family to begin to overcome the challenges they are facing as a family.

Interventions may be required from the Early Help Hubs who will work with families to avoid crisis and homelessness wherever possible.

Use of acceptable behaviour agreements is another tool that maybe used to help maintain the young person within their family setting family.

If, following initial enquiries and interventions it is considered that the young person is at risk of actual homelessness, or imminent homelessness (within 56 days) a joint child in need/part 7 assessment must commence between CYPS and Homeless Team. This assessment will determine a range of factors including if a 16- or 17-year-old:

- Is homelessness today or threatened with homelessness within 56 days.
- Is a child in need - but is not in need of accommodation at this time.
- Is owed a ‘prevention duty’ under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.
- Is not yet homeless, which options would best assist the young person and their family to resolve the threat of homelessness.
- Is owed a ‘relief duty’ under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 as they are already homeless.

- Is a child in need of accommodation due to actual homelessness.
- Indicates they do wish to become looked after, following work with them on their wishes and feelings about both being looked after and what might be offered by Children services and Homeless team if they do not wish to be looked after.
- Is vulnerable and in need of accommodation under Section 20 due to homelessness.
- What will happen if they do not wish to become looked after.

If the assessment determines that a Prevention Duty is owed, then the YPHPO will develop a **Personal Housing Plan (PHP)** with the young person. This will contain practical and achievable actions that the young person and the council will take to prevent homelessness occurring and maintain the young person within a safe family setting.

The Personal Housing Plan and Child in Need Plan, if applicable, will be the key documents that describes what work and steps are required to avoid the young person becoming homeless and avoiding a crisis that may lead to an emergency placement.

The YPHPO will lead on the production and delivery of the actions contained within the Personal Housing Plan in consultation with the allocated social worker and Engage worker.

The Personal Housing Plan (PHP) may contain actions such as:

- Identified steps required to relieve stress between family members in order that the young person can remain in the family.
- Support by YPHPO and Engage worker to help repair family relationships.
- Contacting support and counselling services.
- Registering with providers of supported housing.
- Accessing health and wellbeing services.
- Keeping in touch with the YPHPO.
- Exploring options of staying with other family and relatives or friends to ease stresses within the parental home.
- Seeking education, training, or employment opportunities.
- Engaging with the Early Help Hub and other services identified as suitable and available.
- Agreeing, signing, and committing to acceptable behaviour agreements.
- Details of any child in need plan to run alongside the personal housing plan.
- Other agencies/services may need to assist with the actions outlined in the PHP.

The desired results of these interventions are to ensure:

- Young people and families are empowered to plan transitions to independent living.
- Young people understand the links between housing choice and their financial and employment status.
- Young People know where to get help if they need it.
- The young person is able to stay in a family network where possible and safe and are supported to make planned moves if they need to move out in the future.

A young person aged 16 or 17 who is actually homeless:

If a young person presents as actually homeless the starting point will always be what steps can be taken to relieve the homelessness and avoid the need for an emergency placement. This will mean following the actions and steps described above and exploring all alternatives, such as returning to or staying with family members or suitable friends, which will then allow interventions to be jointly taken by the YPHPO and CYPS with the young person and their family to allow a safe return to home.

If it is not possible to relieve the young person's homelessness, the Duty social worker will ensure that a child in need assessment commences straight away, alongside a homelessness assessment (part 7) completed by the Homeless Team.

If there is a need to provide emergency accommodation whilst the child in need assessment is undertaken, this will be made available through Children's Services. The Duty Social Worker, alongside the Homeless Team worker will establish the wishes and feelings of the young person at this stage and discuss options with the young person in respect of Section 20 accommodation and alternatives. This element of the assessment must always be undertaken jointly between social care and the housing needs service.

A young person may choose not to be accommodated under Section 20. The assessment must consider a young person's wishes and feelings and their capacity to make a decision in their best interests. In the joint Secretary of State guidance, following the Southwark case it is noted that local authorities must ensure that young people are provided with 'realistic and full information' about the services which would be available to them as a child in care and as a care leaver. Advice should also be given about the assistance available through the Housing Act 1996 Part 7 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the possible risk of being found 'intentionally homeless' now or in the future.

CYPS will secure emergency accommodation for 16- or 17-year-olds under section 20 of the 1989 Children Act, whilst their needs, including their need for continuing accommodation and support, are further assessed. If the young person is accommodated for a continuous period of more than 24 hours, the young person will become 'looked after'. The exception to this will be if a young person does not wish to become 'looked after', which will not prevent a young person from being provided with emergency accommodation. There will be some circumstances when the homeless prevention assessment will take longer than 24 hours and a young person's views are pivotal in determining whether section 20 status will be a recommended outcome. Therefore, there may be some circumstances where a

young person stays in emergency accommodation for longer than 24 hours and does not become a child in care.

The assessment will be started and joint working with the YPHPO will assist in this process.

The assessment will begin to gather further information about the young person's circumstances and family relationships, identifying and assessing risk, and any previous involvement with the service. This will also involve direct contact with the young person's parents or carers, or those with parental responsibility, to establish their views about the circumstances leading up to them being homeless. The aim at this stage will be to explore opportunities for the young person to return to their family where it is safe to do so and/or find alternative suitable accommodation.

During the assessment the YPHPO will share information they hold and provide information to the social worker undertaking the CIN, the young person, and the young person's family, about realistic housing options available and potential options if a young person declines section 20.

Homeless 16- or 17-year-olds may not be assessed as a child in need where they have been living successfully and independently in their own accommodation or tenancy for some time without anyone caring for him or her.

Young people for who Section 20 accommodation is agreed, will become a child in care to Children's Services. The young person will be provided with further information about being looked after by the service, including access to information about the care planning and review procedures as well as independent advocacy, where necessary.

Social Workers will:

- Liaise with the Service Manager and Head of Service to gain approval for the Section 20 status to be confirmed.
- Complete all the necessary statutory documentation to confirm the young person's Child in Care (CIC) status and make arrangements for a formal statutory review of the care plan within statutory timescales.
- Liaise with placement services to make a referral for a suitable placement based on the assessment of the young person's needs.
- Seek further approval from senior management if an externally provided placement is required including permission from Service Director if this is an out of area residential placement.
- Complete all case recording and transfer summary at the point of transfer to the CLA team.
- Notify those with parental responsibility of the arrangements that have been put in place.
- Notify any other professionals who are involved with the young person so that they can contribute to the care plan, for example the Youth Justice service worker.
- Ensure that the case will be transferred to the Children in Care and Leaving

Care Service at the first review and all case records and key tasks will be completed at the point of transfer, including a transfer summary and joint visit to introduce the new social worker.

The Social Worker will then be deemed to be the case-holder and will hold primary responsibility for completion of all subsequent looked after children processes including CIC reviews and statutory visits.

The Care Plan will set out, as a minimum:

- The respective safeguarding responsibilities of the local authority and partner agencies.
- The wishes and feelings of the young person and their family (those with parental responsibility).
- The outcomes to be achieved with the young person.
- The frequency of visits the young person can expect from their social worker and other agencies.
- Communication arrangements between everyone identified and involved in the care plan.
- The type of placement best able to meet the needs of the young person.
- The placement provider's responsibilities for notifying the young person's social worker and other accountable staff of any significant change in the young person's circumstances.
- Arrangements for giving notice of intention to terminate the placement (along with the authority's responsibilities for convening a review of the young person's care plan where there is a risk of the placement being terminated).

Where 16- or 17-year-olds are placed in accommodation, either under s20 by Children's Services or via the Homeless team under s17, Children's Services will be responsible for ensuring that the young person has access to basic necessities such as food or bedding.

The Homeless Assessment

Where a young person has refused the offer of Section 20 accommodation and therefore chosen not to become a child in care, they will still be considered to be a child in need and will be eligible for support under Section 17 and have a child in need plan as per the statutory guidance.

The homeless assessment will be completed jointly between the Duty social worker and the Homeless team worker as a child in need and part 7 assessment on the joint housing assessment template.

Interim accommodation will be provided under Section 20 by CYPS. If a young person chooses not to continue to be accommodated under Section 20, the Homeless team should provide suitable alternative temporary accommodation. This should never be provision of accommodation in a hotel or other bed and breakfast type accommodation but could be:

- Specialist supported housing for young people.
- With family friends or relatives.
- A placement into RMBC temporary accommodation managed by the Homeless Team.

In these circumstances, the assessment under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, will determine whether a relief duty is owed to the young person. The accommodation sourced by CYPS will be retained while this assessment is completed and until suitable alternative temporary accommodation can be identified by the Homeless team.

As part of the assessment the YPHPO will lead on developing a Personal Housing Plan with the young person which will identify steps that both the council and the young person will take in order to secure longer term suitable accommodation with support and thereby relieve their homelessness. This may involve:

- Work to negotiate that a young person returns to the care of their family or family network. Given the age of the young person this would always be the preferable option.
- Registering for social housing.
- Support in finding and securing private rented accommodation, with floating support.
- Supported housing schemes.
- Referral to the Housing Assessment Panel for additional priority on the housing register for social housing.
- Assistance with bidding for properties on the council's Choice Based Lettings.

Young people who are not accommodated under section 20 but need to secure their own tenancy may require a guarantor in order to achieve this. In the first instance it must always be considered if a family member or connected person is able to provide this for a young person. If this is not possible it may be necessary for the local authority to be a guarantor for a young person to ensure they can secure suitable accommodation.

Where duties under the Homeless Reduction Act end and there is a further risk of homelessness for the young person, further work will be undertaken by the Duty social worker to determine whether the change of circumstances would trigger further intervention and duties under the Children Act 1989.

In circumstances where CYPS become aware of a 16- or 17-year-old being at risk of homelessness, they must refer the young person to the Homeless Team, under 'duty to refer'. A child in need assessment must be progressed in all instances. The duty to refer legislation places requirements on agencies to refer anyone at risk of homelessness within 56 days to the Homeless team.

16/17-year-olds leaving custody who have no accommodation on release

This protocol also applies to young people in custody. Young people who know where they are going to live upon release and can make preparations for this are

much less likely to re-offend. As soon as it is known that a young person in custody is likely to be homeless the policy will be applied as though they are in the community. Part of the assessment may necessitate visits to the young person in custody and the Youth Justice Service (YJS) will assist in facilitating visits at the secure establishment, however it would be more appropriate that the work is undertaken as part of the remand review or sentence planning meeting. Young people in custody would be owed the prevention duty whilst in custody if they have no accommodation 56 days or less prior to release. If they have no accommodation upon release, they are homeless and would be entitled to be accommodated under section 20, unless they do not wish to be a child in care. Social workers and caseworkers in the secure establishments should have input into any assessment undertaken.

Sentence planning meetings will consider accommodation needs and the YJS will work in partnership with CYPS to ensure young people know where they will be living on release. Release on temporary license can be used to help a young person familiarise themselves with where they will live on release - subject to governor approval and risk management considerations.

Whilst it is hoped that a young person will know where they will be living well in advance of release, the Youth Justice Service is required, as part of the accommodation standard which was developed by the South & West Yorkshire Resettlement Consortium and adopted by Yorkshire and Humber Directors of Children Services, to notify the Director of Children's Services of any young person who does not have a suitable address.

This protocol should be read in conjunction with the Accommodation Standard which supersedes the protocol to ensure that the standards are being met.



G_SWYRCAccommodation Standard Refres

Escalation process

If at any point in the practical working of this joint protocol, or associated procedure, there is disagreement between CYPS and the Homeless Team, or other Services, including the Youth Justice Service, a discussion should be held with a homeless prevention lead. If this does not resolve the disagreement, then all parties should escalate this to their direct line manager, or where this is not possible, to the next management tier as appropriate.

Disagreements should be routinely dealt with via peer-to-peer management discussions to seek to resolve the issue, taking into account any safeguarding issues and keeping the young person as the focus.

Disagreements could arise in a number of areas but are most likely to arise around:

- Communication
- Thresholds for services
- Understanding of the legal duties and how these work in practice
- Roles and responsibilities of different services/officers
- The need for timely action and completion of assessments

Problem resolution is an integral part of professional co-operation and joint working to safeguard and promote the well-being of children and young people. While often a positive sign of developing thinking within a dynamic process this can be reflected in the immediate term as a lack of clarity in procedures or approaches. Professional disagreement is only dysfunctional if not resolved in a constructive and timely fashion.

Attempts at problem resolution may leave one worker or agency believing that the child remains at risk of significant harm. This person or agency has responsibility for communicating such concerns through agreed channels.

It is the responsibility of every professional to try to resolve disagreements at the earliest opportunity, always keeping in mind that the child and young person's safety and welfare is the paramount consideration.

If a professional disagreement arises and the issue cannot be resolved between practitioners, the matter must be referred to their line manager who will discuss with their counterpart in the other service in the hope that the issue can be resolved.

Failure to resolve disagreements between line managers must be further escalated to the Housing Options Service Manager and the relevant Children's Service Manager.

A clear record of all discussions, agreements and actions must be kept by all parties.

Reviewing this joint protocol

This protocol will be reviewed annually, or sooner if required, for example, if there are any changes in legislation and/or government guidance.

Collecting, analysing and acting on information, including data and qualitative feedback, will assist Rotherham Council to address the needs of 16/17 year olds who may be at risk of homelessness in the future. The following will be monitored:

- The number of young people presenting as homeless or threatened with homelessness or referred as homeless to CYPS.
- The number of young people presenting as homeless or threatened with homelessness or referred as homeless under the 'duty to refer' or other referrals to the Homeless team.
- The number and timescales for completion of the joint assessments.

- The number and percentage of young people who were prevented from becoming homeless and where they were living.
- The number and percentage of young people who were or became homeless.
- The number and percentage of young people who become looked after due to being homeless, even if this was for a short period of time.
- The number and percentage of young people who become looked after due to being homeless and were looked after for more than 13 weeks as a result and became an 'eligible' child as a result.
- The number and percentage of young people who were homeless but did not become looked after for more than 13 weeks.
- Monitor the outcomes for those not owed a section 17 duty.
- Monitor any compliments or complaints from young people aged 16/17 and their parents/families.

Supporting young people make choices

I am 'homeless' /being made homeless, am 16/17 years old and I understand that I have a choice about housing and support but what are my options?

<p>I could become a 'Looked After' (child in care).</p> <p>This means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would agree to be in the care of the council until aged 18 (but parental responsibility remains with my parent/s). • I will have a social worker who will meet with me regularly and write a 'care or pathway' plan with me. • I will have regular Child in Care Review meetings where I will meet other professionals who might be supporting me as part of my 'plan'. • I will have accommodation in a placement to suit my needs which could be foster care, a residential children's home, or supported/semi-independent accommodation. • I will receive weekly financial support from Children's Services. • If I'm in care for more than 13 weeks, I will become a 'Care leaver' at age 18. • As a 'Care Leaver' I will receive more support with housing, education, and other needs (up to age 21 – or 25 if I'm still in education or training). • Copies of the Entitlements for Care Leavers can be obtained from the Leaving Care Service. 	<p>I could be offered homelessness assistance and supported accommodation provided by Housing.</p> <p>This means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I won't become a 'Looked After Child'. • I will still require a child in need pathway plan. • Housing Services will undertake an assessment, develop a Personalised Housing Plan with you. You will be required to cooperate with the actions set out in the plan. • I will be entitled to an offer of supported accommodation. The homelessness team will explain the implications if I turn down the offer. • You will have a right to request a review of decision. • If I accept the offer of accommodation, I will have a support worker who will help me with money, budgeting, getting into college or work, shopping, cooking, cleaning and living successfully in the community. • I might also have support from a social worker, or Early Help worker. • When I can live more independently and confidently Housing will help me to find my own accommodation • I must pay the rent, council tax, utility bills such as gas, electric and water rates. If I am not working, I may be able to claim benefits for money to live on and to pay for my rent. 	<p>I could stay at/return home:</p> <p>This means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It has been decided that it is safe for me to be at home, and I feel safe to be there. • Me and my family could get help and support either from an Early Help worker or, if necessary, a social worker. • If I need help and support, this could be to help me remain at home, but could also help me to plan to live more independently in the future. • I could apply to join the housing register and benefit from a planned move when I am ready to live independently in my own accommodation.
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Whichever choice I make, I know that the social worker will take this into consideration as an important part of the decisions made.

The social worker.....(name).....(date).....

Has explained clearly to me the above and I understand my options and what they mean.

Young Person..... (name).....(date).....