

A strategy to prevent and tackle youth homelessness in Nottinghamshire

Executive Summary

In June 2011 Nottinghamshire County Council committed to produce a Youth Homelessness Strategy following a review of its priorities and provision. The Strategy and the supporting commissioning plan set out the Council's commitment to support vulnerable sixteen to twenty-five year olds and teenage parents.

This Strategy contains significant detail on the approach we are proposing to youth homelessness and is supported by a clear commissioning plan and proposals to strengthen joint working between agencies. **Our vision is to improve the life chances, life changes and life choices of young people in Nottinghamshire** who are threatened with or experiencing homelessness, and ensure all young people have the opportunities they need to make a successful transition to adulthood and independence, **by providing a range of support services most appropriate to their needs and circumstances.**

The key aims of this strategy are to:

- **Intervene as early as possible** to prevent housing instability and homelessness from occurring or persisting
- **Ensure service pathways are planned and integrated** to better meet the needs of young people experiencing housing instability and homelessness
- **Safeguard young people who are at risk** because of housing instability or homelessness
- **Improve transitions to adulthood and independence** for young people at risk of becoming entrenched in a cycle of housing instability and homelessness
- **Make better use of available resources** to maintain a sufficient range of accommodation-based services with support for young people experiencing housing instability and homelessness by negotiating better value for money with service providers and remodelling existing service provision

There are a number of key changes to our current approach which run as a theme throughout the strategy and which have a specific rationale. These are described below:

- **A change in the definition of young people** – Supporting People defined “young people” as those between sixteen and twenty-five years of age. The Strategy proposes a new definition of sixteen to twenty-one years of age. This new definition would include those homeless sixteen

and seventeen year olds, for whom the County Council has a statutory responsibility and also recognises the importance of the transition to adulthood. Transition is important in ensuring effective move-on for those reaching their eighteenth birthday, assists young people leaving care and ensures intervention for a vulnerable group who without support would provide a challenge to a number of public services at significant cost

- **Shared operational responsibility** – Homeless sixteen and seventeen year olds have been historically dealt with by Reception and Assessment Teams within Children's Social Care (CSC), on occasion distracting social workers from pressing child protection matters and risking leaving young people without a service to meet their needs. Following a successful pilot in North Nottinghamshire, CSC will share this responsibility with the recently formed Targeted Support Service, which will contain dedicated accommodation staff. This will help protect social work time whilst ensuring that the Council's legal obligations for the initial assessment of homeless children are met. Targeted Support will also be working with a large cohort of vulnerable young people and will act early to reduce the risks of homelessness, in particular through a strong commitment to family work and the training of staff in mediation
- **A reconfigured estate of supported accommodation for homeless young people** – Historically young people's housing units have taken young people across the age range of the Supporting People definition. This has created concerns about safeguarding, particularly when those who are legally "children" are placed with adults who can present significant risks or negative influence. The proposal is to have units dedicated to sixteen and seventeen year olds, to protect those most vulnerable and with short term assessment beds to support a commitment to eliminate the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for this age group. There will also be units to support sixteen to twenty-one year olds with different levels of support dependent upon need. Within the estate there would also be distinct provision for care leavers (to support exit from higher cost care placements), teenage parents and bail beds (to mitigate against the future impact of the transfer of custodial remand costs from central government to the Council)
- **A new pooled budget arrangement and commissioning accountability** – An agreement has been reached for the transfer of the budget for young people's supported accommodation from Adult Social Care, Health and Public Protection (ASCHPP) to Children, Families and Cultural Services. This funding will continue to be reduced in line with the Supporting People business case until 2014-15 and 10% will be retained by ASCHPP to make provision for the twenty-two to twenty-five age

group no longer covered by the young people's agenda. The transferred Supporting People funding will be pooled with £150,000 of Children's Social Care revenue funding to provide a commissioning budget. The responsibility for commissioning supported accommodation for young people will also transfer from ASCHPP to the Group Manager for Targeted Support and Youth Justice

- **A challenge to improve quality and reduce cost** – At present hourly costs for support vary considerably between providers. We plan to provide a challenge to the hourly costs in order to preserve as high a number of units of support as possible. We also plan to look at moving towards a simple "payment by results" model to drive improvements, particularly in relation to eviction and planned move on to independent living
- **A range of floating support** – Supporting People, through ASCHP, will continue to fund an all-age floating support service for people in their own tenancies. For young people this will be supplemented through support system in Targeted Support and Children's Social Care, for example in respect of care leavers.

Background to development of the strategy

This is Nottinghamshire County Council's (NCC) first Youth Homelessness Strategy. It has been produced in consultation with a range of stakeholders from the statutory and voluntary sectors to ensure a **consistent** approach to preventing and responding to youth homelessness throughout the county, and ensure that when young people do leave home this is done in a **planned** way.

From April 2012 Children, Families and Cultural Services (CFCS) will assume responsibility for the commissioning of youth homeless services in Nottinghamshire through the Targeted Support Service (TSS). This function was previously undertaken by the Supporting People (SP) Partnership within Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH).

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This strategy has been produced at a time of significant economic and social change. Most contributors to this strategy, academics and service providers anticipate a rise in levels of homelessness over the life of this strategy; 2012 to 2015. Faced with the prospect of rising demand and diminishing resources, we need to strengthen our approach to tackling youth homelessness in Nottinghamshire.

Early intervention and the **prevention** of homelessness are central to the success of this strategy which recognises that, in most cases, staying at home is the most suitable option for young people, especially those under 18 years of age, unless the risk of harm would make it unsafe for them to do so.

The current situation must be improved. Too many young people in Nottinghamshire leave home early and levels of homelessness amongst young people in the county are unacceptably high.

This strategy provides a framework for all agencies and partners to develop and deliver services which focus on early intervention, prevention and assisting young people to remain at home when it is safe and possible for them to do so, or ensure planned moves to suitable accommodation with packages of support that meet identified needs.

Vision

Our vision is to improve the life chances, life changes and life choices of young people in Nottinghamshire who are threatened with or experiencing homelessness, and ensure all young people have the

opportunities they need to make a successful transition to adulthood and independence, **by providing a range of support services most appropriate to their needs and circumstances.**

Nottinghamshire County Council believes that in the majority of cases, remaining within the family home until ready for independent living offers the best chance for young people to make a successful transition to adulthood.

The average age of a young person leaving the family home in UK is twenty-two, and they return home for short periods an average of three times before permanently leaving the family home¹. There is an established body of evidence that demonstrates the impacts of not being able to cope alone at an early age².

Life chances for young people who experience housing instability and homelessness are poor³. They are less resilient to managing **life changes**⁴, and more likely to make poor **life choices**⁵ than young people who benefit from living in a stable and supportive home environment⁶. Remaining within the family home, where it is safe and possible to do so, for as long as possible is generally in the best interests of most young people⁷.

Legal & Regulatory compliance

This strategy has been produced with due regard to the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- The Children's Act (1989)
- The (England) Children Leaving Care Act (2000)
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations and Statutory Guidance (2010)
- DCSF statutory guidance on the Sufficiency of Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children (2010)
- The Housing Act (1996)
- The Homelessness Priority Need for Accommodation (England) Order (2002)

¹ ONS Social Trends 2010: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/hub/index.html>

² Shelter, Improving outcomes for children and young people in housing need (2009)

³ Decade of progress?, Joseph Rowntree Foundation/Centrepoint (2008)

⁴ Stein, M. Overcoming the Odds, Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2008):

<http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/4159/1/ResearchReview.pdf>

⁵ Arnall, E. Accommodation Needs and Experiences, Youth Justice Board (2007):

<http://www.yjb.gov.uk/publications/Resources/Downloads/Accommodation%20Needs%20and%20Experiences%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf>

⁶ Too much, too young

⁷ CLG, Homelessness Code of Practice for Local Authorities, section 12.7 (2006)

- The Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities (2006)
- The Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities: supplementary guidance on intentional homelessness (2009)
- DCSF/DCLG Guidance on the provision of accommodation for 16/17 year old young people may be homeless and/or require accommodation (2010)

National context

Few will disagree that we face a challenging few years ahead of us. Young people in particular face some huge challenges nationally:

- Rates of youth unemployment (16-24) are at their highest level since comparable records began in 1992; over 1 in 5 (22%)⁸
- There is an acute crisis of affordable housing across the UK and standards in living conditions are polarising⁹
- Over the last 20 years the ratio of UK average house prices to UK average incomes has nearly doubled from 3.0 to 5.5 times income¹⁰
- There are now almost as many over 50s who are second home owners than there are first-time owner occupiers aged 16-24 year old, and a third of the UK's homes are classified as being under-occupied¹¹
- Young people face a number of benefit restrictions, most under-18s cannot claim certain benefits and housing benefit rates are capped at a 'shared room rate' for under-25s renting in the private sector¹² leaving many facing significant shortfalls to make up from other sources of income
- Two-thirds of all new households aged 16-24 were created in the private rented sector in 2008/9¹³
- Recent and proposed changes in welfare benefits are likely to have a more adverse impact on young people than some other groups¹⁴
- Levels of homelessness across the UK are increasing¹⁵

Youth homelessness is not a new problem. It is an entrenched and complex social phenomenon. Levels have remained stubbornly persistent over the last decade despite changes in legislation, significant investments, and improvements to service provision¹⁶.

⁸ ONS, [Labour Market Statistics January 2012](#)

⁹ Shelter, [The Housing Crisis](#)

¹⁰ ONS/Nationwide [ONS UK house price to earnings ratio](#) cited on This Is Money

¹¹ The Intergenerational Foundation, [Hoarding of Housing: the intergenerational crisis in the housing market](#)

¹² DWP, [Housing Benefit Regulations](#)

¹³ DCLG, [English Housing Survey 2008-9](#)

¹⁴ DWP [Welfare Reforms Impact Assessments](#) – the ESA, IS, HB & UC impact assessments all cite young people as being at particular risk

¹⁵ [CLG Statutory homeless acceptances](#) have risen in 7 of the last 8 quarters, CLG,

¹⁶ Joseph Rowntree Foundation, A decade of Progress?

A lot of research has been done to understand the causes of youth homelessness. This often seeks to identify 'risk factors' that lead to and 'triggers' that commonly cause homelessness. Those most commonly highlighted in the research are:

- family disputes and breakdown
- a care history
- sexual or physical abuse in childhood or adolescence
- offending behaviour and/or experience of prison
- lack of social support networks
- debts, especially rent or mortgage arrears
- causing nuisance to neighbours
- drug or alcohol misuse
- school exclusion and lack of qualifications
- mental health problems
- poor physical health

Statutory youth homelessness – the national picture

In 2010-11, young people aged 16-24 represented 37% of all applicants accepted as statutorily homeless and owed a full duty.¹⁷ Nationally, two-thirds of young people accepted as being homeless and owed a full duty are female. Young people accepted as homeless aged 16-17 year olds are five times more likely not to be in employment, education or training than young people in the general population (57% as compared with 11%), and live on very low incomes (median of £45 per week, excluding Housing Benefit).

For young people accepted as homeless 16-17 year olds, relationship breakdown (almost always with parents or step-parents) is the overwhelming reason for applying as homeless (70 per cent). Two in five of young people (41 per cent) affected by relationship breakdown with their parents or step-parents reported that violence had been involved¹⁸.

Such statistical evidence has led the Department for Communities and Local Government to conclude:

"This is an extremely vulnerable group, in need of extensive support, for whom (supported) temporary accommodation could be viewed as a helpful transitional intervention"¹⁹

¹⁷ DCLG, [Statutory Homeless data Table 771](#)

¹⁸ Statutory Homelessness experiences of homeless families and 16/17 year olds, 2008

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

National Policy Drivers

Case Law

There have been a number of court cases relating to the legal rights of homeless young people and the interaction between different pieces of legislation. Most relevant is the House of Lords ruling in *G v Southwark* which is referred to below. **Appendix 1 contains further information about recent case law relating to the legal rights of young people who are homeless.**

Serious case reviews (SCRs)

The consequences of failing to protect and promote the welfare of young people can have devastating and tragic consequences. A review by OfSTED of 482 SCRs²⁰ found two groups at greatest risk – under-1s and over-14s. For this older group, housing instability and homelessness were common factors in the cases. **Appendix 2 contains summary information of some of these CSRs.**

In particular, the review highlights the consistent failure of various statutory agencies to recognise teenagers as children in need. One case that exemplifies this point is from Cornwall involving a young woman aged 17 who had been rough-sleeping who was found alone, dead from an overdose. The young woman was known to both children's services and the housing authority. She was assessed as not meeting the threshold for accommodation under section 20 of the Children's Act, and to be intentionally homeless under the Housing Act. In particular the CSR highlighted:

- Care plans which fail to identify outcomes
- A reluctance (from statutory agencies) to take account of past events
- A 'gate-keeping' approach to taking referrals
- Indistinct use of language
- Confusion about thresholds – despite the existence of clear guidance
- A lack of common understanding about core assessments
- A failure to conduct risk analysis
- A lack of understanding of the dangers in living in families where alcohol and domestic abuse are problematic – despite easily available research
- A failure to appreciate the dangers of being homeless

²⁰ Age of concern: learning lessons from serious case reviews, <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/ages-of-concern-learning-lessons-serious-case-reviews>

- An inadequate reliance on “self-determination” – usually as a justification for a lack of action
- Failure to identify victims of domestic abuse

DCFS/CLG statutory guidance for 16/17 year olds presenting as homeless

Following the House of Lords ruling in *G v LB Southwark* in 2009 all 16-17 year olds presenting as homeless to a local authority were confirmed as being owed a primary duty under the Children’s Act 1989. This means that when a young person of this age presents as homeless to a Housing Authority (the District/Borough Council) they should be provided with temporary accommodation under housing legislation and must be referred to Children’s Services for assessment under the Children’s Act 1989. If they present to Children’s Services first they should be provided with accommodation under s20 of the Children’s Act whilst their status is determined. To ensure that homeless 16-17 year olds do not fall between these two services, local authorities are advised in this statutory guidance to have a joint protocol which sets out how each department will work together and conduct a joint assessment.

No second night out

The coalition government is committed to reducing rough sleeping to as close to zero as possible by April 2012, ensuring that no-one has to spend a second night sleeping rough.

National Youth Homelessness Scheme (NYHS)

This was established in 2010 by the DCLG ‘post-Southwark’. The scheme brings together a coalition of leading youth homeless charities, and seeks to act as a knowledge base for local authorities and their partners in preventing and tackling youth homelessness.

We have used the NYHS models for tackling youth homelessness and developing an accommodation and support pathway to outline NCC’s strategic approach and establish future commissioning priorities.

The Local Context

It is not possible to get a complete and accurate number of the total number of individual children and young people who become homeless; either at the national or local level. The reasons for this are explained in **Appendix 3 to**

this strategy which provides more detail about how levels of youth homelessness in Nottinghamshire were estimated. By our estimates there were at least 289 young people aged 16-24 who were accepted as being homeless, in priority need, and owed a full duty in 2010-11. At least 33 of these were aged 16/17 years old. In addition, there were at least 129 individuals aged 16/17 who entered Supporting People short-term supported accommodation services. The number of 16/17 year olds entering accommodation based services has remained at a similar level for the last 8 years. Over the same period, the number of young people aged 18-24 has continued to rise, with the numbers increasing by 28% between 2007-8 and 2010-11.

The need and demand analysis undertaken to inform this strategy is outlined in Appendix 4. It confirms that the demand for housing support amongst young people aged 16-24 who are homeless in Nottinghamshire presents a significant challenge. NCC is not a Housing Authority and we must prioritise the use of limited resources towards those in greatest need.

Local Policy Drivers

This strategy represents part of NCC's continuing commitment to investing in children and young people who are in greatest need.

Early Intervention

The development of effective early intervention and prevention services is critical at a time of reducing resources across the public sector and rising demand for specialist services.

More effective early intervention and prevention services will result in fewer inappropriate referrals to specialist services and in children, young people and their families receiving the support required much earlier and at a reduced cost. NCC's definition of early intervention is:

'Intervening early and as soon as possible to tackle problems emerging for children, young people and their families, or with a population most at risk of developing problems. Early intervention is a process and may occur at any point in a child or young person's life.'

Our approach to developing this youth homeless strategy will ensure that children, young people and their families will receive the most appropriate support to meet their needs at the earliest opportunity, in order to ensure better outcomes and the cost effective delivery of services. The services

delivered through the Accommodation & Support Pathway in this strategy will sit within Tier 3 of NCC's Pathway to Provision from our Early Intervention Strategy.

Nottinghamshire Joint Working Protocol for Young People Leaving Care and homeless 16/17 year olds

This protocol was jointly developed before the Southwark Ruling and has been reviewed since to ensure compliance with statutory guidance issued. **A copy of the protocol and flowchart of actions from each agency is attached in Appendix 5.** NCC has been piloting a new way of working in Bassetlaw and Newark by ensuring that all 16/17 year olds are referred to TS in the first instance so that their status can be determined and needs met by the most appropriate agency. NCC intends to roll-out this way of working across Nottinghamshire to ensure that TS is the point of First Response within our Accommodation & Support Pathway for young people aged 16/17 who may be homeless. The District/Borough Housing Options services will fulfil this role for those aged 18/21.

Nottinghamshire County Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Children and Young People (September 2010)

Published by NCC and Health, this document outlines joint commitments to promoting and advancing the health and wellbeing of children and young people in Nottinghamshire in line with requirements described in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act (2007). This strategy acknowledges the problem and level of youth homelessness in the county, highlights the significance of the Southwark ruling for CFCS, and that historically the responsibility for under-18s has been a grey area leading to many 'falling through a gap between children's and housing services.' The strategic aims of this strategy are based on the 5 outcomes from the Every Child Matters framework. This is the same outcome framework used to monitor performance within supported accommodation at the present time and will remain central to new contracting arrangements.

Children, Families and Cultural Services Business Plan 2011-14

This sets out how CFCS will work to achieve its vision of making Nottinghamshire a place where children are safe and happy, where everyone enjoys a good quality of life, and where everyone can achieve their potential. Developing the role of the Targeted Support service to deliver integrated support pathways is a key objective within this plan, and the remodelling of these services is consistent with this.

Summary of statutory duties of Children's and Housing services to young people who may be homeless

As a two-tier local authority area, the county council has statutory responsibility for providing children's services and the district and borough councils are housing authorities with responsibility for homelessness. Historically this has led to confusion over who is responsible for what and when. The following section provides an overview of statutory responsibilities towards homeless young people from children's services and housing authorities. **A more detailed overview of statutory duties is provided in Appendix 6:**

Status	Children's services obligations	Housing authority obligations
16/17 homeless, not previously known to children's services	Duty to assess the needs of the child (s17), and to provide accommodation (s20) for a child in need aged 16 or over whose welfare is likely to be seriously prejudiced if they are not accommodated	Duty to assess status (s184) and provide interim accommodation (s188) pending an assessment by Children's Services. Duty to accommodate if offer of s20 accommodation is declined
'Relevant children' aged 16/17	Duty to provide accommodation for an 'eligible child' (care leavers aged 16-17 years unless they are satisfied that his/her welfare does not require it	No duty to secure accommodation
'Former relevant Children' aged 18-21	Duty to provide assistance, including assistance with accommodation, to the extent that his/her welfare requires it	Duty to secure accommodation if they become homeless through no fault of their own and they are vulnerable as a result of having been in care (s193)
'Former relevant Children' aged 22-24	Duty to provide continuing assistance if they remain in education or training	Duty to secure accommodation if they become homeless through no fault of their own and they are vulnerable as a result of having been in care (s193)

18-24, not previously known to children's services	No duty to provide assistance or accommodation	Duty to assess applicants need/status under (s184), and secure interim accommodation (s193) if no other suitable accommodation is available (s197) repealed, new provisions in Localism Bill to discharge duty with offer of private rented)
'Intentionally homeless' aged 16-17, unknown or known	Duty to assess the needs of the child (s17) if unknown, and to provide accommodation (s20) for a child in need aged 16 or over whose welfare is likely to be seriously prejudiced if they are not accommodated	No duty to permanently re-house. Duty to secure interim accommodation for a reasonable period & provide advice/ assistance to find own accommodation (s188) Refer to Children's services (with consent)

NCC's response to preventing and tackling youth homelessness in Nottinghamshire

A range of stakeholders were engaged in developing NCC's response to preventing and tackling youth homelessness in Nottinghamshire. **Appendix 7 contains further information about what stakeholder groups said.** NCC's response has been developed in line with the five steps identified by the National Youth Homelessness Scheme²¹. These are:

1. **Early Prevention** - supporting children, young people and their families in planning transitions to adulthood and independence
2. **First Response** - preventing homelessness when young people present to services in crisis
3. **Accommodation and Support Pathway** - providing effective and supportive pathways to independence for young people accommodated through the strategy
4. **Prevent the next generation of rough sleepers and repeat homelessness** - ensuring 'no second night out' for young people who are 'sleeping rough', and preventing young people from becoming 'cyclical housing instability'
5. **Longer Term Options** - enabling young people who have been homeless but are ready for independence to access sustainable accommodation in the social or private housing sectors

Early prevention

Last year, at least 129 individuals aged 16/17 entered Supporting People accommodation based services. We must do all we can to stop young people from leaving home too early or becoming homeless.

Homelessness is not just a housing problem²² – it is often the end product of various other factors experienced by young people. Most young people who become homeless, or are at risk of homelessness, have needs which could have been addressed before they developed into crises.

A key priority for this strategy is to develop and implement a model for the early identification of young people at risk of becoming homeless in

²¹ CLG, Policy briefing 18, Tackling Youth Homelessness (2008):
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/381492.pdf>

²² Shelter, More than a Roof

Nottinghamshire so that effective packages of support can be provided, for the individual and/or family, to address risk factors associated with homelessness before it occurs. An effective referral pathway also needs to be established between key stakeholders; possibly through the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process.

Both the national research and our consultation with young people locally support the use of Peer Mentor programmes within schools to communicate the realities of leaving home early or becoming homeless.

A key priority for this strategy is to develop appropriate materials to communicate key messages about leaving home and homelessness amongst 11-15 year olds in schools, youth centres and other appropriate locations.

First response

Nottinghamshire is a non-metropolitan or two-tier authority area. Providing children's services is a duty of the county council. The district and borough councils are the local housing authorities who have responsibility for assessing homeless applicants and providing temporary accommodation in some circumstances. This can cause problems when young people present to one or more agency. When young people do present for services as a result of housing crisis, it is vital that this contact is coordinated. At a time when resources are diminishing, we must do all we can to remove duplication in assessments, ensure service provision is integrated, and that young people are directed towards the agency or service that can best meet their identified needs.

Our consultation with young people confirms that in many cases the reality of leaving home and finding somewhere else to live didn't really sink in until it was too late. A number of the young people we spoke to said they would have liked to have had the option of accessing a family mediation or resolution service before ending up 'stuck' in temporary accommodation. Several spoke of the strain or damage caused to relationships with family and friends by not resolving concerns or disputes earlier.

The availability of mediation services for young people and their family to resolve disputes that may end in housing crisis is variable across the county. A key priority for this strategy is to ensure that there is access to mediation services in all areas. These should be provided by an independent, neutral third party who has no stake in the outcome of the mediation.

Providing an enhanced housing options service for people seeking assistance with housing problems has been a priority of CLG in promoting effective homelessness prevention for the past few years²³. This emphasises the need for housing services to undertake holistic assessments of need and provide personalised housing options advice and support to tackle the roots causes of housing need. Nottinghamshire benefits from having two councils that CLG has recognised as being trailblazers and beacons of excellence in this area; Broxtowe and Mansfield.

A key priority for this strategy is to promote and share good practice in tackling youth homelessness between the local authority agencies and areas within the county.

We will work closely with each of the district and borough councils to routinely offer mediation and parenting support services for all 16/17 year olds presenting as 'parental exclusions' (except when there is a risk of abuse or violence).

Nottinghamshire also benefits from having an established joint working protocol between the County Council's Children's services and the District/Borough Housing services for managing presentations from young people who may be homeless aged 16/17 year olds or care leavers. There is a need to resolve the ongoing concerns of some partners to ensure the protocol works as intended.

Another key priority for this strategy is to develop and implement the use of a joint Housing and Support Needs Assessment framework for use between Children's and Housing services. This will include a matrix outlining the criteria and threshold for accessing the range of services identified within our Accommodation & Support Pathway.

Accommodation and Support Pathways

We have used the National Youth Homeless Scheme Accommodation Pathway Model²⁴ to map out existing service provision in the county and identify service gaps and overlap that need to be remodelled over the life of this strategy to ensure that a range of suitable accommodation and support services appropriate to need is available in each locality. **See Appendix 8 for copies of the plot diagrams produced.**

²³ CLG, Expanding choice, addressing need, 2008:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/expandingchoice>

²⁴ CLG/National Youth Homeless Scheme, Introductory Tool: Developing an Accommodation Pathway,

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/youthhomelessness/accommodation/>

Where the prevention of homelessness is not possible we will provide a range of supported housing and housing related support services to meet different needs. **NCC's Accommodation and Support Pathway outlined in Appendix 9.**

Our accommodation and support pathway will include:

- Prevention services: Targeted Support including mediation and support so young people can live with their families whenever it is safe to do so.
- Quick access/short stay accommodation: In settings with appropriate support for those who are vulnerable during assessment periods and whilst longer term plans are agreed.
- Shared accommodation with onsite support for those with a higher level of need.
- Self contained and shared accommodation with visiting support for those who are more able or are ready to move on from settings with higher levels of support
- Foyer services, with self contained accommodation and a range of onsite or visiting services including education and training.
- Supported lodgings, where young people reside with a family.
- Private or social rented housing with visiting support (resettlement & sustainment services) using floating support workers.

These services will focus on meeting the needs of:

- Homeless 16 and 17 year olds
- Care Leavers
- Teen parents identified at risk
- Young people aged 16-21 who have a low level learning disability but do not meet the threshold for CLDT services
- Young offenders in contact with, or known to, the Youth Justice Service (YJS) including those on bail
- Young people aged 18-21 who are vulnerable and whose welfare would be seriously prejudiced if accommodation were not provided

We need to ensure that the more intensive, higher need, supported housing services are reserved for young people in greatest need. Consultation with statutory stakeholders, and analysis of the source of referrals into SP services over the last 8 years, confirms that too many young people are entering high support services without being known to any statutory agency at either the county or district level. Ensuring all referrals go through the Targeted Support or LA Housing Options teams will ensure that young

people are being placed in the most appropriate accommodation available to meet their needs.

A key aim of this strategy is to ensure that existing service provision is remodelled to meet current and future needs. In particular, we will expand the amount of short-term temporary accommodation that is available in each locality. This will be done by negotiating with service providers to remodel existing service provision where possible. We will use this accommodation both as 'respite' whilst ongoing prevention work is undertaken and, where prevention is not possible, as the first stage in our Accommodation Pathway.

Preventing rough sleeping and cyclical housing instability

Rough sleeping

Young people sleeping rough have similar complex and multiple needs to their older peers. As with the other causes of youth homelessness, young people who sleep rough require strategies to prevent and tackle their particular needs at a time appropriate to them.

The main causes for young people rough sleeping are:

- Parental eviction
- Eviction from supported housing
- Offending
- New relationship/relationship breakdown
- Substance misuse

One of the largest causes of rough sleeping amongst young people is after being evicted from temporary accommodation with little or no notice²⁵. An eviction protocol was developed by SP²⁶ with service providers operating licence agreements. Such forms of tenure are exempt from the legal process outlined in part 3 of the Housing Act 1996. As a result, there is little oversight to ensure a due process is being followed, and practice varies considerably.

Some providers do an excellent job at managing identified challenging behaviours following referral, whilst others struggle. Prior to issuing a 'notice to quit', usually 28 days, or evicting someone, service providers should convene a multi-agency case conference with the local housing

²⁵ CLG, Experiences of homeless families and young people

²⁶ Good practice guidelines for tenancy management

<http://www.nottssupportingpeople.org.uk/documents/list/good-practice>

authority to see what can be done to prevent eviction and avoid rough sleeping. This does not always happen and the number of young people being evicted from services is of concern in some areas.

A key priority for this strategy is to review the 'evictions protocol' and conditions contained within licence agreements in supported housing services. We need to ensure that TSS is aware of warnings issued and possible evictions, so that prevention work can be undertaken. We will also consider the use of Payment by Results to achieve improved outcomes in this area where necessary.

Cyclical housing instability

A key challenge for all partner agencies is to prevent repeat incidence of housing instability and homelessness. Preventing a cycle of housing instability and homelessness will improve life chances, choices and opportunities for young people and help to prevent a new generation of people who experience cyclical housing instability at huge costs to themselves, their families and communities, and the public purse.

Ensuring young people who experience homelessness have an integrated pathway plan, which includes an assessment of both their practical and emotional readiness to live independently; will enable them to get the assistance they need to make a smooth transition to adulthood and independence.

Young people need to be assisted and provided with housing stability where this has been absent in their lives to prevent a long-term cycle of housing instability. Assessing the sustainability of accommodation placements and longer term housing options, and preventing repeat placement breakdown and tenancy failure, will be a key priority for this strategy.

Longer term options

The availability and affordability of longer term housing options for young people on low incomes is limited throughout the county, but it is more acute in some areas than others. Most districts report a shortage of 1 bed properties in their area, and demand for this type of property is likely to increase as the government takes steps to address under-occupation in the social rented sector.

Helping young people to get ready for independent living is a key priority for this strategy. When homelessness cannot be prevented young people are likely to be placed in one of the accommodation types from our pathway. All

of the accommodation-based services within our pathway will provide a temporary housing option with the lengths of stay ranging from 12 weeks to 2 years.

There are historic problems associated with the availability and affordability of suitable long-term 'move-on' options for young people residing in Supported Housing. A lot has been done to try and improve the situation in recent years, including:

- the development of a Move-on Protocol & Plan (MOPP) to identify how many people in supported housing are 'ready to move', barriers to move-on and what type of housing are needed where
- the district and borough councils providing discretionary increases in points awarded through Choice-Based Lettings for young people who have completed a programme of support, agreements to write-off previous rent arrears after a defined period of regular repayments, and providing Rent Deposit Schemes to make better use of the private rented sector
- service providers taking a more active role in assisting individuals to make applications for re-housing and ensuring that they can demonstrate a readiness to live independently

We need to build on the good practice and partnership working that has developed in SP over the last 8 years between the district and borough councils, supported housing providers, and local RSLs and work with them to see what else can be done to increase the supply of suitable accommodation, such as bringing long-term voids back into use, and considering acting as a Guarantor for young people who are first time tenants.

A key priority for this strategy is to ensure every young person placed in second stage accommodation-based services receives a holistic and personalised housing needs assessment and support plan within 4 weeks of moving into a service. This needs to address both the practical and emotional readiness of the young person to manage a tenancy successfully. Move-on plans need to be actively managed and reviewed with appropriate frequency.

Future service provision and funding

The majority of accommodation-based services for homeless young people have been commissioned through the Supporting People team within Adult Social Care & Health since 2003. From **April 2012**, this responsibility will transfer to Children, Families & Cultural Services through Target Support.

The majority of these services are of high quality and generally service providers achieve good outcomes in working with young people. A total of **204 units** of accommodation with support will transfer in **October 2012**.

The inherited budget proposal for these services will be supplemented with £150,000 from existing children's services budgets.

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Total budget	£1,949,225	£1,602,001	£1,273,384

NCC's commissioning priorities for accommodation-based services from 2012-15 are outlined in **Appendix 10**.

NCC will seek to achieve its commissioning priorities within committed the budget allocation by price challenging existing service providers and negotiating the remodelling of existing service provision where possible. If this is not possible or new services are required we will invite tenders from existing service providers, but we reserve the discretion to include other providers with successful track records in any future tendering.