

Camden Children Schools and Families

Protocol for working with homeless young
people aged 16 and 17 years



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1 Aim of protocol

Some young people may present as homeless because they find it difficult to remain at home. This may be due to conflict with parents, difficult family circumstances or abuse. They may feel they have to leave or may have been excluded from the family home.

This protocol sets out how the Children's Safeguarding and Social Work division (CSSW) will work with Housing and Adult Social Care (HASC) and Housing providers to ensure that the needs of homeless young people aged 16 and 17 will be met.

The main objectives of the protocol are:

- to carry out Camden's duty to provide suitable accommodation and support for homeless young people aged 16 and 17 in order to safeguard and promote their welfare and help them achieve good outcomes
- to implement Camden's wider strategy to reduce homelessness in the borough
- to assist workers in assessing the housing and other needs of young people presenting as homeless
- to promote multi-agency working and integrated service delivery that ensures young people are able to move successfully to independence.

2 Scope

The protocol applies to all young people aged 16 and 17 who present as in need and are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Services that are involved in the implementation of the protocol are:

- Children's Safeguarding and Social Work
- Housing Options and Advice
- Integrated Youth Support Services
- Youth Offending Service
- Schools and colleges in Camden
- Support workers within the Young Person's Housing Pathway.

3 Principles

- The young person's safety and welfare is paramount.
- Young people are more likely to have better transitions to adulthood if they remain living with their family, and services will work to support families to stay together where it is consistent with the young person's welfare.
- Where a young person is provided with accommodated pending assessment, CSSW will continue to work towards reunification and a return to the family home where possible and applicable.
- All the young person's developmental needs will be assessed to ensure they receive appropriate support services to help them achieve their potential and provide them with opportunities for success in adult life.
- Any accommodation provided will be suitable for the individual young person's assessed needs and use of bed and breakfast accommodation will be avoided. Risk assessments will inform placement decisions in order to safeguard all young people within the housing pathway.
- All agencies will promote multi-agency working practices to ensure integrated services and clear referral pathways so that young peoples' identified needs are met.
- Agencies will respect the young person's status as a young adult moving towards independence whilst balancing this against their continued need for safeguarding and support.
- Information will be shared in line with good practice and on a "need to know" basis. The young person's privacy and confidentiality will be respected where this is consistent with promoting their welfare and the welfare of others.
- Agencies and workers will work collectively and individually to ensure this protocol is implemented and that there is a genuine integration of services so that no young person is left without accommodation or support.

4 Legal framework

Young people aged 16 and 17 who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless are considered to be vulnerable and may need assistance in finding suitable alternative accommodation and on-going support in order to promote their safety and welfare and transition to independence.

CSSW must assess every young person aged 16 or 17 who presents as homeless and requests assistance or is referred by another agency. The purpose of the assessment is to establish whether the young person is a child in need and whether they require accommodation under section 20.

Pending the conclusion of the assessment, CSSW must provide emergency accommodation for the young person if needed.

4.1 Eligibility under section 20 of the Children Act 1989

CSSW **must** accommodate any young person who is assessed as a **child in need and homeless or at risk of homelessness** for any one of the following reasons:

- they have no-one who has parental responsibility for them
- they are lost or abandoned
- their parent or carer cannot (whether or not permanently, and for whatever reason) provide suitable care or accommodation
- their welfare is likely to be seriously prejudiced if they are not accommodated..

A young person will be regarded as a **child in need** where they are unlikely to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision of services by CSSW, or their health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired or if they are disabled.

CSSW may accommodate young people who do not meet the above criteria but whose vulnerability means that providing accommodation under section 20 is the best means of safeguarding and promoting their welfare.

Where a young person is accommodated under section 20 they will become Looked After by Camden and will be provided with all the services that are owed to all looked after children if the young person consents to this.

As a Looked After child, the young person will not be able to claim benefits unless they have children or are registered disabled, but will be maintained by CSSW. However, during the period of assessment before a decision is taken on section 20 status, the young person will be able to apply for income support as they are estranged from their family.

4.2 Eligibility under the Housing Act 1996

As CSSW have the main responsibility for assessment, any young person presenting to Housing will be immediately referred to CSSW. Housing's responsibility for providing accommodation will be limited to the following circumstances, subject to assessment under the Housing Act:

- where a young person is assessed as in need and requiring accommodation under section 20 but does not consent to being Looked After and rejects the accommodation offered to them in the Young People's Pathway and the assessment concludes as part of an overall judgement of the young person's assessed welfare needs that the young person's decision should be treated as determinative;
- where a young person is assessed by CSSW as not requiring accommodation under section 20, and refuses the accommodation offered to them in the Young People's Pathway;
- in exceptional and urgent circumstances where CSSW are not able to carry out assessments, for example overnight, but only on referral from the Emergency Duty Team.

Young people who are provided with accommodation, but who are not Looked After under section 20 will be able to claim benefits in their own right.

4.3 Support under section 17

In cases where it is judged the young person is not eligible for section 20 accommodation or where the young person has refused, or is deemed to have refused section 20 accommodation, the case will be closed to CSSW and referred to HASC for assessment for accommodation under the Housing Act 1996.

However, CSSW can provide other services and support to young people under section 17 (children in need) in order to:

- remain in the pathway under housing legislation
- support them to remain or return home
- support any arrangement where the young person goes to live with another member of their family (a kinship care arrangement)

5 Roles and responsibilities

5.1 Referring agencies

Agencies that are likely to refer young people for help because of homelessness include schools, college and the Integrated Youth Service.

Workers may be approached by young people who have been excluded from the family home or are considering leaving or may identify young people who are at risk of becoming homeless.

Initial work with the young person could explore:

- their individual circumstances
- where they are currently living
- whether they are able to remain or return home and whether they will need services to support this, for example through mediation
- whether there are other family members who can look after the young person.

There is an expectation that young people and their families will engage with mediation services provided prior to referral and whilst assessments are being carried out.

5.2 Housing

The legal duties placed on the Housing Department are set out in section 4 of this protocol.

Housing workers will attend the monthly Homeless Young People Panel where CSSW assessments are considered. Young people will be referred to HASC in the circumstances set out in section 4 above.

Information gathered for the CSSW assessment will be made available to HASC for the purposes of homelessness prevention or to assist the assessment under the Housing Act 1996. Any referral to Housing will be undertaken as quickly as possible in order to prevent the young person becoming homeless or to facilitate the statutory homelessness assessment.

5.3 CSSW

CSSW have the main responsibility for assessing young people aged 16 and 17 who present as homeless or at risk of homelessness. The Looked after Children and Leaving Care Service (LACLC) have social workers who carry out assessments and work with young people and their families to facilitate a return home where possible. All referrals coming through Camden's MASH will be directed to these workers within 5 working days of referral.

Where the young person is first placed they will be allocated a social workers from the LACLC service to support them through the assessment process and will continue to have an allocated worker if they become looked after in order to provide a statutory social work service under looked after children legislation.

If the decision of the assessment is that the young person does not meet the criteria for being looked after, the young person will be transferred to the Housing Department for a service under housing legislation and the case will be closed to CSSW.

5.4 Housing support workers and providers

Housing support workers will:

- work in partnership with CSSW social workers and other professionals in the young person's network to implement the young person's pathway or child in need plan
- contribute to CSSW assessments of the young person's needs
- where appropriate, support any mediation or other work to enable the young person to return home
- keep the social worker informed of the young person's progress and any key events or incidents
- attend all professional meetings and reviews of the young person's plan
- notify the social worker if the young person goes missing from their placement in line with the Camden Safeguarding Children Board Missing Children protocol
- make appropriate child protection referrals where the young person is at risk of significant harm (see section 12).

6 Referral pathways

6.1 Criteria for referring young people

Workers should make a referral to CSSW where:

- the young person is an unaccompanied minor
- the young person has already left or been excluded from the family home
- the home environment is not safe for the young person and places them at risk of harm
- the young person's behaviour is putting them or others at risk and parents are unable to manage this behaviour
- the young person is particularly vulnerable to poor outcomes if they remain at home
- the young person and their family will require services and support from CSSW to enable them to remain at home or go to live with another family member.

The Youth Offending Service should refer young people they work with where:

- their anti-social or offending behaviour has put them in conflict with their parents and are consequently excluded or at risk of exclusion from the family home

- they pose a risk to others in the family home, particularly younger siblings
- their bail conditions or a court order means they cannot return home and an alternative address is needed in order to meet any bail conditions
- they are about to be released from custody and cannot return home.

YOS should also provide a copy of any ONSET or ASSET assessment by way of risk assessment.

6.2 Making referrals to CSSW

Where a young person is not currently known to CSSW or the case is closed, all referrals to CSSW must be made to the MASH team using a CAF referral record.

The MASH manager will make a decision on the referral within 1 working day and referrers will be notified of the outcome. Once the referral has been screened, and it is confirmed that this is a homeless 16 or 17 year old referral, this will be passed on to the LACLC service for assessment. Referrals to the LACLC service from the MASH team should be made via the contact referral record.

If the MASH manager has decided that the case meets the threshold for a child protection response due to concerns about the young person's welfare, the case will be passed to the Brief Intervention team social worker to carry out a section 47 child protection enquiry but a joint assessment will be carried out with the LACLC service social worker.

6.3 Young people already known to CSSW

If a young person is already **allocated to a social worker in a long term social work team** but is at risk of homelessness, their assessment will be updated to take account of their changed circumstances.

The young person's allocated social worker will notify the homeless young people social workers in the LACLC service to arrange a meeting to plan and undertake a joint assessment.

7 Managing cases

7.1 Duty to support families

CSSW has a duty to support families and help young people to remain at home as long as this is consistent with their welfare. Some young people who present as homeless may only need some "time out" from their family in order to address issues with their parents.

As part of the assessment, CSSW will:

- take parent's or carer's views into account when deciding on eligibility for accommodation under section 20 although in the event of a dispute the final decision is that of CSSW and the young person; parents or carers have no right of veto if a young person aged 16 or 17 is assessed as eligible for section 20 accommodation and agrees to the accommodation offered;
- use mediation services to help the young person and their parents improve relationships and negotiate their return home;
- where possible, provide services to support the young person to remain at home;
- help families to explore alternative care for the young person within their extended family and friends network using Family Group Conferences to facilitate this.

Where a young person is accommodated, work will continue to help them to return home and there is an expectation that young people will engage with services and use resources appropriately.

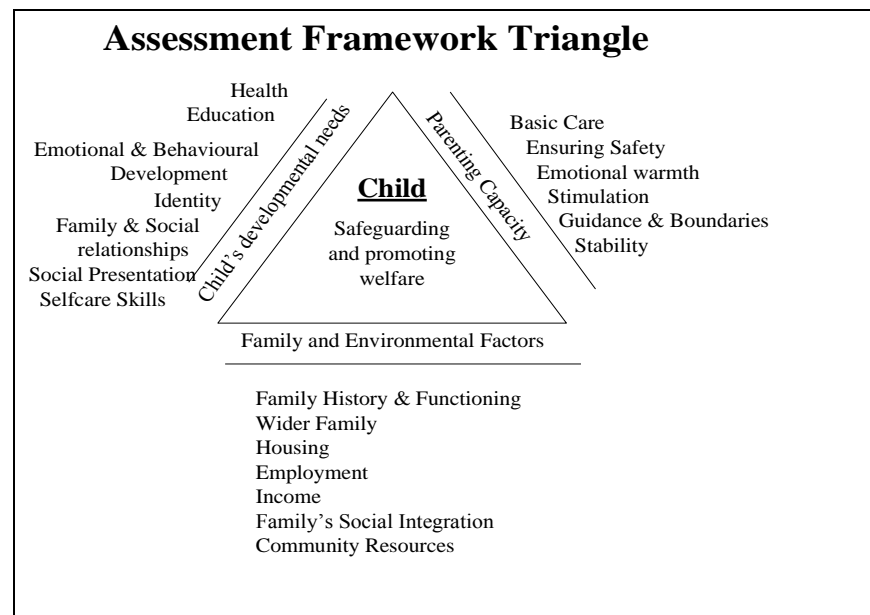
7.2 Mediation and working towards a return home

- CSSW has a duty to support families to stay together, and initial work with the young person will focus on enabling the young person to remain living at home unless this is clearly not in their best interests. Parents will always be involved on assessments and their views sought, particularly on whether they agree to their child being accommodated. However in the event of a dispute the final decision is that of CSSW and the young person; parents or carers have no right of veto if a young person aged 16 or 17 is assessed as eligible for section 20 accommodation and agrees to the accommodation offered;

Where appropriate, mediation will be used to improve family relationships and allow the young person to remain or return home. All young people will be offered between 6-12 weeks of mediation.

7.3 Homelessness assessment

Following referral, CSSW will carry out a homelessness assessment which will be completed within 35 days. All CSSW assessments are based on the Assessment Framework, which looks at the young person's developmental needs in a number of key areas such as health and education, as well as their parent's ability to meet these needs and any other family and environmental factors that might affect outcomes for the young person.



If it appears that the young person has no suitable accommodation at the point of referral, CSSW will provide accommodation for the young person in an assessment centre immediately pending the outcome of the assessment. Any decision in relation to the young person's status under section 20 will be made following discussion of the assessment at the monthly Homelessness Panel. During this time, assessment centre staff will provide information for the CSSW assessment.

Assessments will also be carried out where a young person presents as homeless but has been living independently and has somewhere temporary to stay (for example, sofa-surfing). Assessments will look at how long they can be expected to stay at their temporary accommodation and whether or not it is suitable to their needs.

The assessment will be carried out in conjunction with key workers in the assessment centre to ensure all information about the young person and their needs and progress is included. The purpose of the assessment is to:

- establish whether the young person is homeless and eligible for accommodation under section 20
- identify their specific developmental needs
- decide on the most appropriate housing provision within the Housing Pathway
- inform their Pathway plan.

7.4 Young parents

If the young person is a parent and is accommodated, a separate assessment of the child will be carried out to establish their needs and the young person's parenting capacity before a decision is made on whether the child should also be looked after or what other action may need to be taken. Pre-birth assessments will be carried out by the hospital social work teams.

When working with young parents and expectant mothers, social workers will ensure:

- the parent/young person is allocated to suitable accommodation within the Pathway
- the professional network is fully involved in planning for the young person and their child
- the young parent can access their full entitlement to benefits and maternity grants.

7.5 Age assessment

Some unaccompanied asylum seeking young people may appear to be older than the age they claim to be and it may be difficult from documentation to establish their age.

Where there is any doubt about the young person's age, but there are reasons to believe that they are the age they claim to be, CSSW will presume that this is the case and will continue to follow this protocol until an age assessment has been carried out.

An age assessment will only be carried out if the Home Office disputes the young person's age or there are reasonable grounds to believe that the young person is significantly older than they claim to be. The assessment will be carried out by the LACLC service social worker who undertakes the homelessness assessment using the Merton compliance test.

7.6 Working with young people

When working with young people during assessment, it is important that the young person's views are taken into account. They should be fully informed about the system of support that is available. In particular they should be informed of the implications of being accommodated under section 20, including how they will be supported as a looked after child, how being accommodated will affect their benefit entitlement and what support they will be entitled to subsequently as a care leaver.

They should also be given accurate information about what assistance may be available to them from Housing under the Housing Act 1996 if they do not become looked after, and how any entitlement to assistance by Housing will be determined. In particular, the possible risk of becoming intentionally homeless in future and the implications of this for further assistance with accommodation should be made clear to the young person. This is to ensure that the young person is able to make an informed decision when consenting to accommodation.

The steps taken to ensure that the young person was properly informed must be clearly recorded on the case record.

8 Homelessness Panel

All assessments will be reviewed at the monthly Homelessness Panel, attended by:

- the LACLC service team manager
- assessing social workers
- the mediation officer
- the relevant IRO
- the LAC Principal Officer
- the Pathways Commissioner
- the Housing Options team manager.

The assessing social worker will present their assessment to the Panel and a decision made about whether the young person is a child in need who should be accommodated under section 20 or whether they are not eligible for section 20 accommodation and should therefore be referred for accommodation under Housing legislation.

In cases where it is judged the young person is not eligible for section 20 accommodation, or where that young person has refused, or is deemed to have refused section 20 accommodation, the case will be closed to CSSW and referred to Housing for consideration under the Housing Act 1996.

A joint letter will be sent from CSSW and Housing, with the decision of the panel explaining that as a homelessness prevention measure, accommodation will continue to be provided via the Young Persons Pathway.

In the event that a young person who is not accommodated under section 20 cannot continue to be accommodated in the Young Person's Pathway and is threatened with homelessness, or refuses the accommodation offered, they will be referred to Housing and, if homelessness cannot be prevented, an assessment under the homelessness legislation (Housing Act 1996) will be undertaken.

If the Panel is unable to come to a decision or more information is needed, the case may be reviewed at the next Homelessness Panel. Cases will also be reviewed at the Panel when the young person reaches 18.

9 Providing services

9.1 Services under section 17

If a young person is assessed as being in need but does not require accommodation, CSSW may provide services and support to meet any identified needs in order to improve outcomes. Section 17 may also be used

to support any kinship arrangement. All services and support provided will be detailed in the young person's Children In Need plan.

9.2 Looked After Services

Where a young person is assessed as in need and requiring accommodation, and agrees to become looked after, CSSW will ensure they have:

- an allocated social worker who will visit them on a 6 weekly basis or more frequently if required
- an Independent Reviewing Officer who will ensure Camden is meeting all their statutory requirements as corporate parents to the young person
- suitable accommodation within the Young Person's Housing Pathway or other local authority accommodation according to their assessed needs
- a placement plan setting out how key workers will work with young people on a day-to-day basis in order to safeguard and promote their welfare
- a pathway plan setting out what services and support will be made available to the young person to help them live independently and make a successful transition to adulthood
- review meetings held every 6 months to look at whether their pathway plan is achieving planned outcomes and ensure the young person is receiving adequate support and services.

Young people who are accommodated (under s.20) at ages 16 and 17 years will qualify for services until they are 18 years old. However, if they qualify as an eligible or relevant child (aged 16 or 17 years old who has been looked after by CSSW for up to 13 weeks between 14 to 17 years), or former relevant child they will normally be entitled to a full leaving care service up to the age of 21 (or 25 if they continue in higher education).

They will only cease to be entitled to a leaving care service if they have returned to living with their parent or someone with parental responsibility or residence order for a continuous period of at least 6 months and that relationship has not broken down.

9.3 Housing Pathways

The young people's housing pathway is a specialist housing service designed to provide supported accommodation to vulnerable young people. All housing pathway accommodation is commissioned and monitored by Camden CSF through a quality assessment framework to ensure standards are suitable for young people.

Young people accepted on to the pathway are provided with accommodation and support from key workers to enable them to move on to independence. The pathway:

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- provides a pathway of positive, planned moves to independence
- supports young people to engage in education, training or employment, make the best use of their leisure time through diversion and help them to avoid becoming involved in offending or anti-social behaviour
- helps young people to gain the vital skills needed for independent living, such as financial management, health, safety and personal relationships.

All referrals to the pathway are dealt with by the Young Person's Pathway Referral Co-ordinator based in the Resource team who will liaise with the housing providers and find a suitable housing option for the young person based on the information available from assessments.

There are 4 stages through the pathway:

- Young people will initially be referred to an **assessment centre** whilst CSSW are carrying out assessments. Housing support workers based at the centre will contribute to assessments and decisions on what pathway provision best meets the young person's assessed needs, as well as the type of support the young person will need.
- Young people with specific needs or circumstances will be accommodated in **specialist accommodation**, for example, mother and baby units. Young people will remain in a specialist resource e.g. a mother and baby unit until it is felt they are able to move on to the next stage.
- Young people who do not need high levels of support from specialist resources will be moved onto **progress stage accommodation** where they are supported to develop vital life skills such as budgeting that will enable them to move on to independence successfully. The young person will also be encouraged to engage in education, training and employment.
- When a young person has developed the necessary skills for independent living, the **Pathways and Move on team** will help them to gain their own independent accommodation, which may be a private rented flat-share. All young people entering the private sector will receive floating support from housing key workers in order to help them maintain their tenancy

Young people's progress within the pathway will be assessed and monitored by their allocated social worker and housing key worker through statutory pathway reviews arranged by their social worker on a 6 monthly basis, where decisions on their movement through the pathway will be taken.

10 Dealing with child protection issues

CSSW have a responsibility to investigate any child protection concerns and take any necessary action. Staff should refer to “*Working together to safeguard children*” (DfE 2015) and *London Safeguarding Children Board child protection procedures* for full details.

If a young person’s situation or behaviour raises serious concerns about their safety, or the safety of other children and young people, child protection procedures may need to be used. This may be where the young person:

- is in a violent or abusive relationship
- may be being sexually exploited (see section 10)
- may have been trafficked and is still under the control of traffickers (see section 10)
- is in contact with the perpetrator of suspected abuse
- is pregnant or is caring for their child and there are concerns for the (unborn) baby’s safety and welfare
- exhibits behaviour that puts them or others at serious risk
- goes missing for more than 24 hours; staff should refer to the Camden Safeguarding Children Board guidance on missing children
- is known to have committed offences against children.

Where thresholds for intervention under child protection procedures are reached, workers **must** report concerns to the allocated social worker. All child protection referrals must be in writing using a CAF referral and directed to the allocated social worker. Urgent referrals may be made by telephone and followed up by a CAF within 48 hours.

11 Safeguarding young people in specific circumstances

Some young people’s circumstances make them more vulnerable to harm and abuse. Allocated social workers and housing key workers need to be aware of specific indicators in order to identify these young people and take appropriate action.

11.1 Child sexual exploitation

Child sexual exploitation describes situations where a young person takes part in sexual activity in return for goods, food or accommodation. It normally takes place in the context of an exploitative relationship where there is a

power imbalance between the young person and the perpetrator, for example a much older boyfriend, and where consent is given under duress.

Social workers and key workers should refer to the Camden Safeguarding Children Board guidance available at www.cscb.org.uk.

11.2 Trafficking

Some unaccompanied asylum seekers who are looked after by Camden may have been illegally trafficked into the UK for the purposes of commercial exploitation. They may remain in the control of exploiters even whilst looked after.

Social workers and key workers should refer to the Camden Safeguarding Children Board guidance available at www.cscb.org.uk.

11.3 Missing young people

Going missing can put young people at risk and can be an indicator the young person being involved in child sexual exploitation or trafficking. Social workers and key workers need to be aware of their role in carrying out risk assessments and reporting young people as missing under the Camden Safeguarding Children Board missing children protocol available at www.cscb.org.uk.

11.4 Gangs and youth violence

Some young people living in pathway accommodation may be at risk either because they are involved in gang activity or because they become a victim of gangs. Social workers and keyworkers need to be aware of any potential gang involvement and carry out risk assessments

11 Young people's Pathway Panel

The young person's pathway panel is convened by housing commissioners and providers, with attendance by representatives from CSSW and YOS. The Panel meets fortnightly to discuss difficult or complex cases or arising issues and make decisions about what action needs to be taken. The purpose of the panel meeting is to discuss those young people who are either:

- young people who are in need of further services and support from CSSW to enable them to either access or maintain a place within the Pathway
- young people whose changing needs require a move within the pathway

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- young people who are at risk of being evicted from their current supported accommodation provision because they present with a high level of risk to themselves and/or others
- young people who are likely to be evicted from the Young People's Pathway and will not be offered another place within the pathway
- young people who are not using pathway accommodation
- any incident of violence or anti-social behaviour requiring a community safety response.

The panel will also share information on young people who are involved in gangs or serious youth violence.

In any of these cases, the panel should consider what extra support the young person needs in order to keep them within the Young Person's Pathway or any alternative accommodation that should be offered by CSSW.

Any referral to the panel for a young person who is accommodated under section 20 will be notified to the young person's allocated social worker and Independent Reviewing Officer so that a statutory LAC review can be convened.

12 Discharge from care

As the duty to provide accommodation under section 20 only applies where the young person is homeless, any young person who is accommodated under section 20 who successfully returns home or who subsequently does not appear to require a place on the housing pathway will be discharged from care.

It will be made clear to young people at the placement agreement meeting that any overnight stays must be agreed in advance with housing support workers and the allocated social worker. This will be monitored by housing support workers.

If there is clear evidence that the young person is consistently returning home for long periods of time, including overnight, this will be notified to the social worker who will make a decision on whether or not the young person continues to require s.20 accommodation.

In making this decision, the social worker will look at:

- the level of contact with the family
- the amount of time spent in the supported housing accommodation
- whether or not the home environment remains safe and suitable for the young person
- the young person's relationship with their family.

All young people will be discharged from care once they reach the age of 18. However, if they qualify as an eligible or relevant child (aged 16 or 17 years old who has been looked after by CSSW for up to 13 weeks between 14 to 17 years), or former relevant child they will normally be entitled to a full leaving care service up to the age of 21 (or 25 if they continue in higher education). (They will only cease to be entitled to a leaving care service if they have returned to living with a parent or someone with parental responsibility or residence order for a continuous period of at least six months and that relationship has not broken down.)

13 Benefits

CSSW has a duty to support looked after children financially, and young people who are accommodated under section 20 will not be able to claim benefits. However young people can apply for benefits during the assessment period.

Young people who are not subject to section 20 (Looked After Children status) will be able to claim income support or job-seekers allowance and will need to apply for housing benefit to pay for their accommodation.

Following assessment, the social worker will, where necessary, refer the young person on to the Connexions Service for help to apply for benefits. The social worker will provide a copy of the initial assessment and a letter stating that the young person is living independently, is estranged from their parents and will not be accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act.

When a looked after young person is 18 years old, they will be eligible to claim benefits and will be referred to Connexions for help in making their claim.

14 Young people from outside Camden

Young people presenting as homeless in Camden but whose previous address was in another borough may, after an initial assessment by Camden, be referred back to their original local authority for further assessment. Normally Camden will only carry out detailed assessments of young people presenting as homeless who have a strong local connection with the borough such as where their family currently live in the borough.

However, Camden will ensure that an initial assessment is carried out of any young person presenting as homeless and that any immediate needs of the young person are met pending any referral to another authority. In the event of the other authority disputing responsibility for the young person, Camden will assess and provide for the young person as if they were Camden's responsibility.

15 Post 18 support

Young people who are Looked After for less than 13 weeks prior to their 18th Birthday will not be entitled to a leaving care service. However, they may be eligible for limited support from CSSW that will focus on providing support for their education, training and employment.

Young people who are Looked After prior to their 18th Birthday for 13 weeks or more will normally be former relevant children and will be entitled to a full leaving care service up to the age of 21 (or 25 if they continue in higher education).

Such young people will, however, cease to be former relevant children eligible for a full leaving care service where they have returned to living with a parent or someone with parental responsibility or residence order for a continuous period of at least six months and that relationship has not broken down.

16 Recording and management information

CSSW case records will be kept on the division's electronic case recording system, Framework i. Management information will be generated from Framework i by the relevant administrative officer based in the Quality Assurance Unit.

Records kept by providers in relation to pathway provision and outcomes for individual young people will be kept on the SPOCC computer system and will provide quarterly reports tracking young people's progress.

Management information and reports will be shared with key stakeholders via the CSF commissioning group in order to ensure the implementation of this protocol.

Records on young people kept by housing providers must be returned to CSSW once the young person has left the pathway as the records form part of the young person's looked after records which may need to be accessed by them in the future.

17 Multi-agency working

17.1 Framework

Under the Children Act 2004, all agencies have a duty to co-operate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. To achieve this, all agencies will:

- share information, including assessments, in a timely manner and in line with agreements regarding confidentiality

- attend all meetings and reviews or provide a written report where attendance is not possible
- contribute to assessments where appropriate
- play an active part in monitoring the young person's progress against the aims set out in their plan
- maintain a reasonable level of inter-agency contact, particularly where the young person is in crisis
- consult with other agencies regarding any case decisions, especially decisions to end services or discharge from care.

17.2 Confidentiality and information sharing

All information provided by the young person is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties unless:

- the young person has given their consent to the information being shared
- it is necessary to share the information in order to protect the young person or others from significant harm
- under court order
- there is a statutory power under the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 to share information with a relevant authority (police, local authority or health authority) for the purposes of preventing crime.

By law, young people aged 16 and 17 are deemed capable of giving informed consent to information sharing and must consent unless they lack the mental capacity to make this decision, for example they have serious mental health or learning disabilities.

In these cases, their social worker will decide who should provide consent on their behalf. Normally this would be a parent or someone with parental responsibility. If this is not possible, guidance may have to be sought from the Courts.

Young people will be told at the outset that in order to receive a full service from CSSW, they need to give written consent to CSSW to obtain information from other services and the police where relevant and to share information with other professionals, including housing support workers.

In discussions with young people, workers will make clear what information needs to be shared, with whom and why. Where information is being shared, workers will pass on only relevant information for the stated purpose.

It is lawful for agencies including the police to share information regarding young people who are involved in gangs and offending in order to protect other young people within the pathway accommodation or to stop the commission of a crime.

17.3 Dispute resolution

The aim of this protocol is to encourage decisions to be taken jointly and to ensure that the needs of young people are addressed by the most appropriate agency within the framework of legislation and good practice.

Disputes or disagreements arising between professionals should, in the first instance, be discussed between their respective managers and a resolution sought within a reasonable timescale.

If this is not possible, the matter should be referred on to senior managers within Housing and CSF.

If the dispute involves child protection concerns, the matter should be referred to the Child Protection Co-ordinator based in the Quality Assurance Unit of CSSW.

17.4 Training

All workers who are responsible for implementing this protocol and who come into direct contact with young people will receive safeguarding children training provided by the Camden Safeguarding Children Board to the relevant level depending on their level of contact with young people. Staff will also receive CAF training.

CSSW social workers should receive training on working with homeless young people as part of their core training. Housing support workers who work directly with young people will be able to access social work training provided by CSSW and the Camden Safeguarding Children Board.

17.5 Monitoring & review

This protocol will be reviewed on a 12 monthly basis by the Children's Trust Management Group.