



Suffolk Safeguarding Children Board

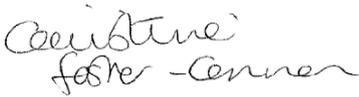
Joint Protocol 2019 – 2021

Joint working arrangements – ensuring we meet the needs of homeless 16- and 17-year olds

May 2019



Agreed and signed by:

<p>Codrutza Oros-Marsh Suffolk County Council Head of Quality, Engagement and Professional Development CYP and ACS</p>	
<p>Ian Blofield Ipswich Borough Council Head of Housing and Community Services</p>	
<p>Heather Tucker Mid Suffolk and Babergh Corporate Manager - Housing Solutions</p>	
<p>Davina Howes West Suffolk Council Assistant Director (Families & Communities)</p>	
<p>Cairistine Foster-Cannan East Suffolk Council Head of Housing</p>	

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Policy Version History

Version	Date of LSCB Endorsement	Date of Review	Document Author
V1	May 2016	May 2019	Julia Vernon
V2	April 2019	May 2021	Tracey Curtis, Strategic Commissioning Lead for Corporate Parenting, Suffolk County Council and District & Borough Councils Representatives

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This joint protocol forms an agreement between Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Borough and District Councils.
- 1.2 The ambition is to ensure legislation, caselaw and guidance is applied consistently across our county, improving the experience, choice and accommodation our young people presently receive, thus preventing homelessness.
- 1.3 Collectively we consider that young people are best placed living with their families or within the existing family network, as long as it is safe for them to do so. We will make every effort to support this and commit to continually explore reunification.

2. Principles

- To safeguard and promote the wellbeing of our young people.
- To prevent homelessness.
- To eliminate unsuitable accommodation for our young people and adopt a partnership approach to accommodation where resources are full.
- To keep a young person's voice at the centre of practice. The wishes and views of the young person to be taken into consideration and will be fully evident in throughout the process.
- To consider individual circumstances in a holistic way, including pregnancy, and relationships, as a household.
- To embrace collaborative working relationship between partners and agencies with a focus on aligning procedures to make services easy to access by young people and families.
- To establish a consistent pathway – the flowchart has been agreed to facilitate this.
- Partner agencies to recognise and promote opportunities for young people (aged 16 or 17) to live with their families and get support from them if safe to do so. There is a joint commitment in investing in resources that enhance stronger family network.
- Uphold that for young people whose assessment outcome indicate that they are imminently homeless, the Local Authorities Duties under section 20/17 of the 1989 Children's Act take precedence over the duties in the 1996 Housing Act.
- A commitment from partner agencies to ensure services provided will as much as possible be within the local community of the children and their families.

- Information sharing; All parties will adhere to the government guidance “Information Sharing Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers March 2015”.
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419628/Information_sharing_advice_safeguarding_practitioners.pdf
- Joint assessments between CYPS and Housing services will determine the needs of the child, and the services required to meet this need. Assessment timescales should not undermine the provision of services.

3. Joint Commitments

- The County Council and Districts & Borough Councils all want to achieve what is best for 16/17-year olds - this will typically mean a 16 / 17-year-old remaining living with their family, or existing network, where it is safe for them to do so.
- To prevent homelessness and achieve a landscape where no Suffolk young person is being placed in unsuitable accommodation, even on a temporary basis, ensuring adequate levels of accommodation are available.
- Commitment to joint assessments and closer working relationships between agencies will ensure that young people and families would not have to continue to repeat their stories to several professionals.
- Ensuring our young people have recourse to clear ‘child friendly’ information regarding their rights and entitlements. Understanding the full implications of decisions, they make.
- Advocacy will be offered to young people throughout the process.
- We will keep our young people at the centre of what we do and respecting the views of the young person, recognising that these can change. Consulting with them regularly regarding their pathway and experiences.
- To recognise the significant benefits of partnership working and joint assessments.
- To maintain records of 16/17 young people accommodated, to allow us to understand the scale and composition of presenting needs and shared following GDPR guidance. This data needs to influence the work of the County Council and the Local authorities, in terms of our processes and commissioning.
- The YPHAG will monitor sufficiency of suitable accommodation.
- Allied approach to the likelihood that young people may change their minds throughout this process, and it is legitimate for them to do so.

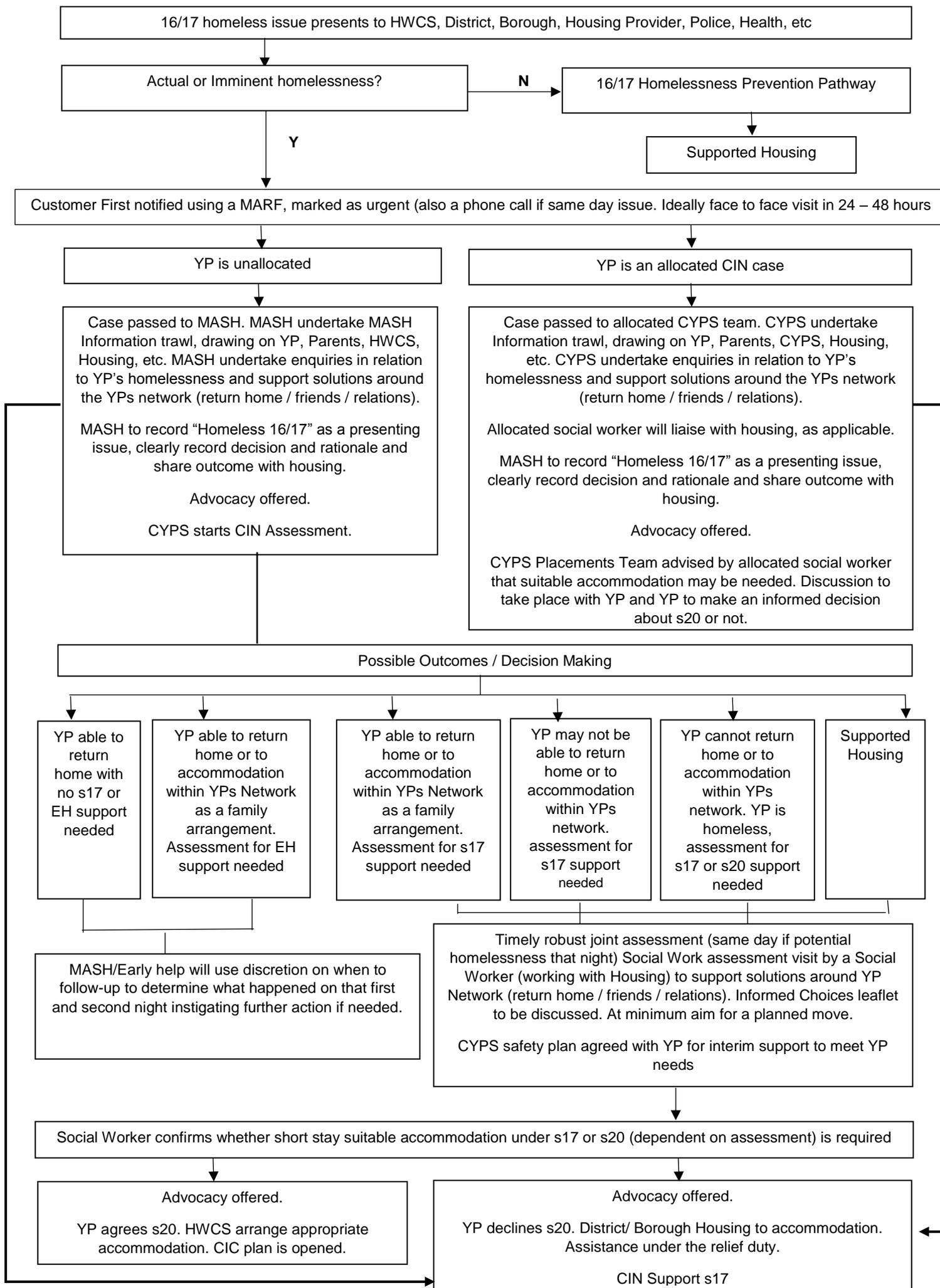
4. Purpose

- 4.1 This protocol relates to responsibilities and duties to ensure the prevention of homelessness of young people aged 16 – 17.
- 4.2 This protocol aims to safeguard children and prevent homelessness through effective partnership arrangements, building on our existing work in this area.
- 4.3 We wish to make certain we all meet our statutory responsibilities.
- 4.4 We want our young people feel, safe, informed, and listened to.

5. Information

- 5.1 Code of guidance for homeless 16- and 17-year olds.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/provision-of-accommodation-for-16-and-17-year-olds-who-may-be-homeless-and-or-require-accommodation>
- 5.2 The Children's Act 1989, Chapter 41, Part III, Section 20 Provision of accommodation for children.
- 5.3 The Housing Act 1996, Part 7.
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/part/VII>
- 5.4 The House of Lords judgement of May 2009, in the case of G v LB Southwark and the subsequent statutory guidance issued in 2010 clarifying the interface between the duties under the Children's Act and homeless legislation.

6. Flowchart – 16- and 17-year olds presenting as homeless



7. Governance

- 7.1 The Young Person Housing Action Group and the Local Safeguarding Children's Board have ownership of this protocol.

8. Dispute Resolution

- 8.1 Complaint sources can be the County, the Boroughs / Districts, an advocate or by a young people themselves.
- 8.2 All disputes will be dealt with urgently following the agreed actions, principles and commitments within this protocol.
- 8.3 Where a joint decision is proving problematic a champion will be consulted in the first instance.
- 8.4 Where a joint decision remains problematic, the matter will be escalated to senior managers.
- 8.5 Case studies will be taken to the YPHAG where it is felt learning can be achieved, or the protocol needs reviewing. All partners will be notified of the individual case in advance to allow each organisation to fact find and invite the appropriate staff to openly discuss the individual circumstances and decisions made in the case.
- 8.6 Matters can be raised to the LSCB board when consensus cannot be reached.
- 8.7 Requirements on the level of provision needed by all partners should be reviewed at the YPHAG at regular intervals and will be at the next precluding meeting if any young person is placed into unsuitable accommodation.
- 8.8 Targeted training can be recommended and delivered by the group.
- 8.9 The overarching governance is with the LSCB board, and where necessary cases can be taken to this group for discussion.

9. What does success look like to us

- 9.1 This protocol being used as an active resource and tool when considering homeless 16- and 17-year olds.
- 9.2 A consistent offer is experienced by young people of Suffolk.
- 9.3 Young people being suitably accommodated.

10. Appendices

Appendices will be added shortly.