



Knowsley Council

**Joint Homeless Prevention Protocol for 16-
and 17-Year-old Young Persons**

VERSION CONTROL

Version	Author	Date
1.	E. Hindley	22/10/2018
2.	E. Hindley	27/12/2018
3.	A. Broadbent	29/01/2019
4.	E. Hindley	19/07/2019
5.	S. Kent A. Broadbent A. Marie-Lucas	June 2024
6.	E. Abbott	19/06/2025

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SEVEN MINUTE BRIEFING – 16/17-YEAR-OLD HOMELESS PRESENTATIONS

1. FREQUENTLY USED ACRONYMS

CA 1989	Children Act 1989
CA 2004	Children Act 2004
CIN	Child in Need
CSC	Children Social Care
HA 1996	Housing Act 1996
HRA 2017	Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
KHSS	Knowsley Councils Housing Solutions Service
KMBC	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
MASH	Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub
MARF	Multi-agency Referral Form
MHCLG	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
YJS	Youth Justice Service
S17	Section 17 of the Children Act 1989
S20	Section 20 of the Children Act 1989

2. CONTACT DETAILS

AGENCY/ SERVICE	CONTACT INFORMATION
CSC	knowsleymash@knowsley.gov.uk 0151 443 2600
MARF (MASH)	https://marf.knowsley.gov.uk/Home
KHSS	Maureen.ashcroft@knowsley.gov.uk housing.solutions@knowsley.gov.uk 0151 443 2333
Duty to Refer	https://www.knowsley.gov.uk/residents/housing/homelessness-housing-advice/knowsley-housing-solutions-team
Advocacy	NYAS 0808 8081001 0808 808 1001

3. ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN AGED 16 & 17

SHORT TERM ACCOMMODATION	
Emergency access bed space	Emergency access bed space within a family home via Knowsley Supported Lodgings (KSL – See below) Maximum of 10 working days.
Shelagh Delaney (SHAP)	Ofsted Registered Provision. Young person's (age 16 -21) short term Ofsted registered accommodation with support whilst accommodated. Breakfast and evening meal provided each day. Staff on site from the hours of 08:00 – 17:00. From 17:00 – 08:00 there is a security guard on site. Service charge applies - max twelve week stay.

SETTLED ACCOMMODATION	
Knowsley Supported Lodgings (KSL) provided by Local Solutions	Ofsted registered provision. Child is accommodated within a family home like setting. KSL provision is registered with Ofsted. Child is allocated a support worker. Placement can be up to two years and can be the same home as the initial emergency access bed space (where the child has been originally placed via this route) if all parties agree. Suitable for ages 16 to 19.
Octavia Court	Ofsted Registered Provision. Young Persons Ofsted registered supported hostel. Accessed via a supported accommodation application form. Own unfurnished flat with staff on site. Service charge applies. Placements are up to nine months and residents are supported to achieve independent move on. Not suitable for any child less than nine months away from their 18 th birthday (due to under 18-year-olds requiring a guarantor and the guide max length of stay in the accommodation is nine months).

- 3.1 At every stage the child will be consulted about them returning home and every effort will be made to consult with the family, - the workers being mindful of their legal duties and boundaries set out under GDPR. . It is accepted that the home environment is usually the best for a child and so, wherever possible, efforts will be made to reach an agreement to facilitate the child to return home.
- 3.2 A child would not be expected to have a placement in each of the above options. However, the options are designed to illustrate the available housing options. Supported

Lodgings and Octavia Court are the principal longer term housing options which provide accommodation and support and act as a stepping stone for a child to make the transition to independent living much easier.

4. INTRODUCTION

- 4.1 This protocol has been developed to enhance the support offered to young people and their families by setting out the shared commitments, roles, and responsibilities of CSC and KHSS. It aims to strengthen collaborative working in response to young people aged 16 and 17 who present to the Council as homeless or at risk of homelessness. By working together more effectively, both services will ensure timely, needs-led assessments and coordinated support that promotes positive outcomes for young people and their families.
- 4.2 Underpinning this protocol is the understanding that in the majority of cases, 16- and 17-year-olds are best accommodated in their family home, and that a departure from this is best dealt with as part of a planned transition.
- 4.3 This protocol takes account of the guidance issued in April 2018 (updated 2025) to local authorities by MHCLG¹. and [Supporting children aged 16 and 17 who need help when they are homeless - GOV.UK](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5b0ed0b240f0b634b1266bc9/Provision_of_accommodation_for_16_and_17_year_olds_who_may_be_homeless.pdf)

5. FOUNDATIONS

- 5.1 CSC and Strategic Housing agree that:

- Homelessness can be prevented through active early intervention.
- All agencies should seek to prevent homelessness where they can.
- 16- and 17-year-olds are best accommodated in their family home, or where this is not safe or appropriate, with responsible adults in their wider family and friend network.
- 16- and 17-year-olds should not remain in the family home where there is actual or threatened abuse, exploitation, or a serious risk of harm within the home. It may also be unsuitable if the relationship with family has broken down irretrievably, the environment is unsafe or the child's needs cannot be met. 16- and 17-year-olds who are homeless are vulnerable and in need of support, they require an assessment of their holistic needs and not limited to their accommodation needs.
- The appropriateness of mediation and family group conferences should be assessed by CSC in every case.

- 5.2 This protocol:

- Ensures compliance with the legislation and supplementary guidance issued by MCHLG.
- Prioritises the safety and welfare of the child.

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5b0ed0b240f0b634b1266bc9/Provision_of_accommodation_for_16_and_17_year_olds_who_may_be_homeless.pdf

- Provides an efficient and timely response to children aged 16 and 17 who present to the authority as homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- Prevents children from being passed between departments or having to repeat their story multiple times.
- Enhances joint working through better understanding and communication between CSC and KHSS.
- Delivers a child centred response to the needs of 16- and 17-year-olds who are homeless or threatened with homelessness enabling them to make informed decisions about their future.
- Gives families and 16- and 17-year-old children clarity about the homeless assessment process, the accommodation options, their rights and options in relation to becoming a looked after child via Section 20 and the support available to them.

6. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND GUIDANCE

- 6.1 There is a legislative framework and statutory guidance which is referred to in this protocol. For more information please see the supplementary documents.

Relevant legislation, case law and statutory guidance:

- Children Act 1989;
- Children Act 2004;
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- R (G) – v – London Borough of Southwark 2009
- Housing Act 1996;
- Homelessness Act 2002;
- Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities;
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017;
- Prevention of homelessness and provision of accommodation for 16- and 17-year-olds who may be homeless and/or require accommodation.

- 6.2 The specific legal framework for responding to 16- and 17-years-old presenting as homeless is set out in:
- Section 17 and Section 20 of The Children Act 1989
 - Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018 and the Priority Needs Order 2002 Children's Services duty to accommodate a child in need, under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 takes precedence over its duties under the Housing Act 1996 in providing for children in need of accommodation aged 16/17.
- 6.3 Where circumstances give rise to duties under competing legislation, **the CA 1989 takes precedence.**
- 6.4 At each stage the child's wishes and feelings will be taken into account and the process explained to them, so they are able to make informed decisions throughout the process.

The child will be directed to specific websites, independent advocacy and KMBC produced leaflets that explain the assessment process, the requirements of S17 and S20 of the CA 1989, the responsibilities of KHSS to produce a Personalised Housing Plan and the associated responsibilities placed on the child, and the accommodation options open to them.

- 6.5 At both homeless prevention and relief stages, KHSS will produce, in conjunction with the child, a Personalised Housing Plan setting out the reasonable steps which KHSS and the child will take to resolve the situation.

7. FIRST POINT OF CONTACT

- 7.1 CSC and Strategic Housing have agreed to adopt a one front door approach which aims to ensure that there is a consistent approach to all 16- and 17-year-old children who seek help from the Council because they have nowhere safe to stay. This means that all children will be referred into the MASH who will take responsibility for referring the child to CSC. CSC will then initiate the assessment process detailed below in section 8.
- 7.2 In the event that the child presents directly to KHSS either by telephone, online or in person then KHSS will refer the case to the MASH.
- 7.3 In the event that the child is already open to CSC and advises that they are homeless, the social worker, with the child's consent will complete a Duty To Refer to KHSS and contact the service direct to advise of the young person potentially at risk of homelessness.
- 7.4 At the point of the referral to the MASH, a referral will also be made to an Independent Advocacy Service to help the child understand their rights so they can make an informed decision as to whether they wish to choose/ agree to a S17 or S20 and the options available to them.

8. ASSESSMENT STAGE

- 8.1 Once a MARF referral has been completed to advise that a child/ young person has presented as homeless, this will be screened by MASH and a Social Worker will be allocated to the child/ young person for CSC to make contact the same day via the MASH for decision making and NYAS referrals.
- 8.2 CSC will initiate the 'Child and Family Assessment' and will arrange to visit the child within 24 hours of receiving the referral that the child is homeless or threatened with homelessness. The purpose of this assessment is to provide a holistic assessment of the child's needs not just in relation to their accommodation status. The child's decision to become accommodated by the local authority via S20 will be held at the earliest opportunity and not wait until the completion of the assessment. As soon as contact is made between the Social Worker and the child, the child will be issued with a homeless consent form to sign advising that they have been made aware of what it will mean to apply as homeless to the Local Authority. A copy of this consent form can be found in Appendix A attached to this document. Support will continue to be provided via a child in need plan if the child chooses not to become accommodated by the local authority.

- 8.3 To avoid the child having to repeat themselves, it is paramount that the initial interview is conducted jointly between CSC and Housing. The allocated Social Worker will contact KHSS either via the contact methods set out in Section 2 or via the completion of a duty to refer with the consent of the child and request a same day joint interview. KHSS are committed to achieving the performance target of same day joint initial interviews where possible. The allocated Social Worker should liaise with KHSS to arrange a suitable time and location for the interview to be conducted.
- 8.4 If a joint interview is requested by the Social Worker after the end of the working day (e.g. after 17:00pm), the services will arrange a joint interview for the following working day (or on the Monday if the 16- or 17-year-old presents on a Friday). CSC will still arrange to visit the child within 24 hours of receiving the referral and attend a subsequent joint visit with KHSS.
- 8.5 Following the initial joint interview, a decision will be made as to whether it may be possible to facilitate the child to return home on the same day, or arrangements made as to whether alternative suitable accommodation options are available with the child's wider family. Where the child has nowhere safe to stay then emergency accommodation should be secured (see section 11 Accommodation). Even where the child is provided accommodation whilst CSC complete the Child and Family Assessment, CSC with the help of KHSS if required, will seek to facilitate the child to return home or explore potential alternative accommodation solutions.
- 8.6 If the child is able to return home, CSC will continue with the Child and Family Assessment and make a decision as to the ongoing support provision for the child and the family. This may be via level two or three services via the Early Help Service.
- 8.7 The timeframe for completing the Child and Family Assessment is ten working days. The decision should be communicated to KHSS immediately via the Housing Solutions Case Officer allocated to the child. Should there be no update from CSC regarding the progress or outcome of the Child and Family Assessment after eight working days from the initial visit, the Housing Solutions Case Officer should contact CSC and request a further update. A copy of the Child and Family Assessment **MUST** be made available to KHSS no later than one working day following its completion. The Child and Family Assessment will provide one of the following outcome decisions:
- 1) Child in need – S17 of the CA 1989 – the child has been assessed as a 'Child in Need' and it has been identified that the child and their family would benefit from some with help and support. This support can include support with accommodation from either CSC or KHSS, financial assistance or social work support.
 - 2) Child requires accommodating – S20 of the CA 1989 – The child has been assessed as requiring a safe place to live which cannot be provided by their parents at the moment. This triggers a duty for the Local Authority to accommodate, and the child becomes a Looked After Child.
 - 3) No further action.
- 8.8 Child in need – S17 of the CA 1989

If the child is found to be 'in need' (S17) then CSC will consider whether there are any additional requirements and will complete a CIN plan. KHSS will comply with their homelessness duties under HA 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (prevention and relief) and CSC and KHSS will use an integrated approach to resolve the situation. **NOTE** - If the child is found to be a CIN (S17) who is homeless and wants to be accommodated, then S20, the duty for CSC to accommodate, will be met (see Section 11 Accommodation).

8.9 Where a child makes the choice not to become S20, KHSS will work with the child to secure a suitable housing option to relieve their homelessness and secure them somewhere safe to stay. If the child still cannot return home or move in with a family member (that is supported by CSC) then KHSS will make an offer of accommodation to end the relief duty. This will in most cases be to a supported housing solution.

8.10 Where the offer of accommodation is refused then KHSS will advise the child that the offer is a final offer, and that refusal will end the Council's relief duty owed to the child and that their case will be referred back to CSC via the MASH following the MARF process. Where possible, the case will be allocated back to the original Social Worker, however where this is not possible, a new Social Worker may be allocated. The Social Worker will then review the Child and Family Assessment and seek to implement alternative accommodation and support via S17.

- If KHSS are unable to secure an offer of accommodation within 56 days of the child being owed the relief duty, then they will have to consider whether the child became homeless intentionally and make a main duty decision. There are two outcomes from this:
 - The child became homeless unintentionally in which case they are owed the main homeless duty and KHSS will continue to seek a suitable offer of accommodation. The duty, as with the relief duty, can be ended with acceptance of the offer of accommodation or refusal. Refusal will result in referral back to the original Social Worker as outlined above in 8.8
 - The child became homeless intentionally in which case they will not be owed the main homeless duty and will be referred back to CSC as outlined above in Section 8.10.

8.11 Child requires accommodating – S20 of the CA 1989

If the child is found to be a CIN (S17) who is homeless and **wants to be accommodated**, then S20, the duty for CSC to accommodate, will be met (see Section 11 Accommodation). In this circumstance, CSC will look to accommodate the child, rather than KHSS.

8.12 When a decision is made by the child, this will be confirmed in writing with them signing the relevant paperwork. A copy of the agreement to be S20 decided by the child is attached in Appendix B to this document.

8.13 No further action

Where a child is found not to be 'in need' (S17) and no longer requires accommodating CSC should look to refer to Early Help Services for support via Level 2 and Level 3 where appropriate to prevent repeat presentation. The case should only be closed when

both parties are satisfied that the child is suitably accommodated and has access to appropriate support outside of the Council provision. This would mainly be a situation where the child has been accommodated with friends or family who have been assessed as suitable by CSC and are happy to provide ongoing accommodation and care.

For a step-by-step guide to the assessment process, please use the flow chart attached in Appendix C and make use of the Crib Sheet attached in Appendix D.

9. HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

- 9.1 In some circumstances, a child may approach the Council before they find themselves in a situation where they have nowhere safe to stay. KHSS have specific duties under the HRA 2017 to work with anyone who presents as threatened with homelessness within the next 56 days. If a child presents as threatened with homelessness, to any agency, a referral must be made to KHSS via the duty to refer form (see contact details table in Section 2) who will also refer to CSC via the MASH using the MARF process (where the referral to them has not come from MASH/CSC). The MARF referral should be completed the same day that the child approaches KHSS for advice for assistance.
- 9.2 For children who approach KHSS for advice and assistance and state they are currently sofa surfing or temporarily residing with family or friends, although KHSS would not consider the child to be homeless or threatened with homelessness, a MARF referral will still be made so that MASH can screen this to ensure that there are no immediate safeguarding concerns that need to be dealt with and determine whether any referrals to further services are required.
- 9.3 Early Help services and KHSS will work with the child and their carer with the primary aim of stabilising the situation and preventing homelessness. Both agencies will ensure all alternative accommodation options with extended family and friends are explored if it is not possible for the child to remain at home

10. OUT OF HOURS

Contact out of hours may result in initial contact being made with either CSC or KHSS. The immediate priority will be to ensure that the child has somewhere safe to stay, this will be carried out by Children's Social Care Emergency Duty Team (see Section 11). Once office hours have resumed, the MASH should be notified and the assessment process outlined above should be initiated.

11. ACCOMMODATION

Initial temporary accommodation provision

- 11.1 The process for providing this accommodation is set out to best meet the child's needs in the context of the accommodation options that are available to the Council.

Emergency housing duties will always be met. Very often where a child seeks help from the Council in situations where they have no place safe to stay, then they will have a need for emergency housing.

11.2 The overarching principal under this joint protocol is that the duty to secure accommodation is dependent on which Council Service was approached first:

- If the child is referred to MASH (by another service/ agency apart from KHSS) and allocated to CSC or the child contacts CSC out of hours – the child is accommodated under the CA 1989 until the outcome of the Child and Family Assessment is concluded. If the child refuses to be S20, then the CA 1989 accommodation duty ends and from that point if they continue to be accommodated, they are accommodated under the HA 1996 duty to provide temporary accommodation.
- The child presents directly to KHSS or is referred directly to them under the duty to refer with no prior contact to CSC. Following a referral to MASH, the child will be accommodated under the provisions of the HA 1996 until either it is confirmed that they are S20, at which point the CA 1989 duty takes precedence, or the relief or subsequent main homeless duty is brought to an end.
- If the HA 1996 duty to provide temporary accommodation ends and the child remains homeless, then the child will be accommodated under the respective CA 1989 duties.

Note: The shift between accommodation duties is a matter of legal fact and is not discretionary. However, despite duties changing this will not necessarily mean that the child will have to move accommodation. Every effort will be made to minimise the disturbance to the child during this period of housing and support crisis.

11.3 CSC and Strategic Housing have jointly commissioned the emergency access bed space (see Section 3). Access to the emergency access bed space can be arranged through KHSS (note: despite KHSS arranging access this does not affect the duties to secure accommodation as set out above). Should the child contact CSC first, CSC should access to the emergency access bed space themselves if this is required at that point.

11.4 The emergency access bed space should typically be only used whilst a child is under assessment.

11.5 If the emergency access bed space is full or the child is refused on the basis that they are too high risk for that accommodation, then the responsibility for arranging accommodation lies with the service whose duty it is to provide the accommodation. However, it is reasonable for both CSC and KHSS to seek mutual aid to identify suitable options where they are experiencing difficulty in securing accommodation. **Any disputes regarding the provision of accommodation and the duty under which it should be provided should be put in writing to the CSC, KHSS and the Group Manager of Housing who will urgently seek to find a resolution.**

Permanent accommodation provision

Whereby CSC are required to provide permanent accommodation for the child, this will

be accommodation sought in line with the person's wishes and feelings. This will often be done through the offer of a Knowsley Support Lodgings placement or alternative supported accommodation.

- 11.6 Whereby KHSS have a duty to provide an offer of permanent accommodation to the child, this will often be in the form of a Knowsley Supported Lodgings placement or semi-permanent accommodation where this available.

12. 16- OR 17-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN KNOWN TO YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE

For the following section, please read in conjunction with the YJS CSC Protocol 2018.

- 12.1 When a 16- or 17-year-old child is approaching release from custody CSC will complete an assessment of need at least four weeks prior to their release date. Ideally when a 16- or 17-year-old child is released from custody they should live with parents, guardians or another appropriate adult. YJS should ensure that both CSC and KHSS are aware of impending releases so that a joint approach can be taken to providing support for the child alongside family mediation or other family support.
- 12.2 Any child who is not able to return to a family home on release will require accommodation under S20 of the CA 1989. CSC will need to confirm suitable accommodation in time for the Planning Release Meeting and no less than 10 days prior to the planned release date. If the child refuses to be accommodated under S20 CSC should notify KHSS and complete a Single Assessment.
- 12.3 CSC have a duty to accommodate on release a child who was looked after or was a relevant child when they entered custody or have become a relevant child by virtue of being remanded to local authority care.
- 12.4 In circumstances where a child is in the Youth Court and is unable to return to their family home, YJS will immediately inform CSC. If the child is open to CSC this will occur via the allocated social worker. Where the case is not open to CSC this will occur via MASH confirming that an urgent response is required. CSC will explore all other accommodation options including another appropriate adult known to the family or supported lodgings (CSC may request assistance from KHS if required). CSC must take account of the risk to and from the child in all possible placements.
- 12.5 There may be exceptional circumstances where YJS are aware that a child open to them will require accommodation outside of normal office hours and they have concerns about the risk to or from the child. YJS will share relevant information with CSC and request support from KHOS in accessing temporary accommodation.

13. REVIEWING THE PROTOCOL AND MONITORING

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

Collecting, analysing, and acting on information, including data and qualitative feedback, will assist Knowsley Council's Children's and Housing services to address the needs of 16- and 17-year-olds who may be at risk of homelessness in the future.

Children's Social Care and Housing will monitor the following:

- The number of young people presenting as homeless or threatened with homelessness or referred as homeless to Knowsley's Housing Solutions Service.
- The number of young people presenting as homeless or threatened with homelessness or referred as homeless under the 'duty to refer' or other referrals to Knowsley's Housing Solutions Service.
- The number and timescales for completion of the joint assessments.
- The number and percentage of young people who were prevented from becoming homeless and where they were living.
- The number and percentage of young people who were or became homeless.
- The number and percentage of young people who become looked after due to being homeless, even if this was for a brief period.
- The number and percentage of young people who become looked after due to being homeless and were looked after for more than 13 weeks as a result and became an 'eligible' child as a result.
- The number and percentage of young people who were homeless but did not become looked after for more than 13 weeks.
- Monitor the outcomes for those that are not owed a section 17 duty.
- Monitor any compliments or complaints from young people aged 16/17 and their parents/families

16 – 17 Year Olds Presenting as Homeless

What the Law says?

Under Part 3 of the Children Act 1989 and Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 to secure or provide accommodation for homeless 16- and 17-year-old young people.

Provision of Accommodation under Section 20 or Section 17 of the Children's Act
Case law states that where a young person is identified as a child in need (including in need of accommodation) they should be accommodated by Children and Young People's Services under Section 20 of the Children's Act, therefore, making them 'looked after'.

The guidance is clear that Children's Services cannot choose whether to support young people via Section 17 rather than Section 20.

A young person is, however, able to make that decision providing it is an informed decision and clearly evidenced.

This is an information checklist to support young people to make a decision on being supported as a Child in Care or as a Child in Need.

What you need to know?

We will undertake a Child and Family Assessment with a housing officer and a social worker from Children's Services.

Your Social Worker will make sure you have all the information you need and that your views are recorded and considered, you can also choose to have an independent advocate.

Your family will be included in your assessments and plan if it is safe to do so.

Some accommodation isn't free, but you will be supported to understand about benefits and budgeting.

Don't sign this until you have been through the full document with your Social Worker and independent advocate and are then able to make an informed decision on how you want to be supported.

If you make a decision to be supported as a Looked After Child, you will then have to sign a Section 20 consent form, which the Social Worker will go through with you.

Homelessness Application Check List

This checklist provides young people with information to help them understand the implications and expectations of making a 'Homeless Application' under Section 184 of the Housing Act 1996 Part VII to their local housing authority.

Each point needs to be read out with the young person so they can make an informed decision about their choice of being supported under Section 17.

- ✓ Any emergency accommodation may not be near to your home/college/work placement or training so you may need to catch a bus or a train.
- ✓ You will need to comply with a variety of rules set by both the council and the accommodation provider.

- ✓ The housing authority will only offer you accommodation following its enquiries if you have not been offered accommodation by Children's Services or, alternatively, have definitely refused that accommodation.
- ✓ You will need to contribute towards the cost of your housing either from your own funds or through Housing Benefit. Children's Services will support you with basic funding or vouchers for food and travel, until you receive your benefit payments,
- ✓ If the local housing authority decides that it is your fault you are homeless because of something you have done or not done, it will provide temporary accommodation for a short period to give you time to find yourself somewhere else to live. Once you have had a reasonable period to make your own arrangements the accommodation it is providing will end, even if you have not found anywhere yourself.
- ✓ If the local housing authority decides that it is not your fault you are homeless and that you have a local connection to its district, it will need to find more permanent accommodation for you. You may have to stay in temporary accommodation for a period before it can arrange this other accommodation.

It might arrange:

- Housing which requires you to engage with an onsite support worker, possibly sharing with others
- You will need to comply with the tenancy or licence agreement and will lose the accommodation if you don't.
- There is no specialist help or provision for those exiting the Local Housing Authority system; you will not receive any special treatment when you turn 18 or if you become homeless again.

I, _____(name), have understood the above information concerning what it will mean to apply as homeless under the Housing Act 1996 Part VII.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Consent form for young people who do not wish to apply for accommodation to be arranged by their housing authority

I confirm that I fully understand that I have been assessed by the housing authority as being in need of housing due to my current homeless circumstances.

I can confirm that currently I do not wish to be accommodated by the housing authority.

Name (print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Children Cared for Check List

A checklist for young people to help them understand the implications and expectations of becoming a 'Looked After Child and the Local Authority becoming a 'Corporate Parent'.

This checklist has been drawn up in order to ensure that the young person is fully aware of the expectations and implications of becoming a 'Looked After Child in terms of ensuring that they are able to make an informed decision to be supported under Section 20.

Each point needs to be read out with the young person so they can make an informed decision about their choice of being supported under Section 20.

- ✓ You will have an allocated Social Worker
- ✓ As a Looked After Child you will have statutory visits from a Social Worker at your accommodation.
- ✓ It is necessary and expected of you to have a Looked After Child medical examination.
- ✓ It is expected and important for you to attend your Looked After Child review meetings. The review meeting will enable you to talk about your achievements and general progress.
- ✓ If you are attending any formal education provision then we will need to complete a personal education plan (PEP) with you and your educational provision.
- ✓ It is important for you to inform your Social Worker or Personal Advisor if you have any holidays planned or any other days away. It is important to inform your Social Worker of your whereabouts.
- ✓ There will be an assessment of your needs and it is important for to be part of this assessment.
- ✓ You will be expected to be involved in your pathway plan which discusses your plans for the future and your future living arrangements.
- ✓ If you live in supported housing it is important for you to allow your Social Worker to visit
- ✓ If you live in supported housing it will be expected for you to adhere to the tenancy agreement.
- ✓ You will be expected to engage in direct work that may assist you with budgeting support, housing support, independent living skills / life skills, support with family relationships and support to engage in education, training or employment.
- ✓ Upon leaving care at age 18 you will be eligible for the one bedroom rate of Housing Benefit until you reach the age of 21 (depending on your income). Most single people applying for Housing Benefit aged between 18 and 21 years old will get the lower rate to enable them to afford shared accommodation.

Consent form for young person who does not wish to become a 'Looked After Child by Knowsley Council.

I confirm that I fully understand that I have been assessed by the Local Authority, Children's Social Care as being in need of accommodation under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 due to my current homeless circumstances.

I can confirm that it has been explained to me that the Local Authority cannot force me to become a Looked After Child, but by choosing not to be looked after by the Local Authority I am limiting the options available to me in terms of after care services.

I can confirm that I do not wish to be accommodated by the Local Authority.

Name (print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Copy to be given to the Young Person and one added to the Child and Family Assessment

CHILDS AGREEMENT TO VOLUNTARY ACCOMMODATION

PURSUANT TO s20 CHILDREN ACT 1989

Child's Details

	Child 1	Child 2	Child 3
Name			
DOB			
Address			
Primary Carer			

Mother's Details

Name	
DOB	
Address	

Father's Details

Name	
DOB	
Address	
Parental Responsibility	Y/N

Name of professional seeking consent	
Role/job title	
Date, place and time at which the form has been completed and signed	

Proposed family time arrangements

[illegible]

I, (Child/Young Person) agree to being accommodated by Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council.

I understand that I will be placed in accommodation provided by the local authority until I return to my family or other plans are made with me.

I understand that I may withdraw consent at any time and leave the accommodation provided by the local authority.

I understand what coming into care means and that I will be a Looked After Child of Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council.

Signed.....

Dated this..... day of 20..

Appendix C

Joint Protocol for Homeless Young People (16- and 17-year-olds) – Flow Chart

Young person presents as homeless to **Children's Social Care (CSC)** via the front door or via open contact with existing Social worker

Young person presents as homeless to **Knowsley's Housing Solutions Service (KHSS)** via an online presentation form.

If the child is not allocated to a Social Worker at time of presentation, one will be allocated and the Social Worker will arrange to contact the child the same day.

If presentation to KHSS received after 17:00pm from Monday to Friday or over the weekend, contact will be made on the following working day.

If presentation is received before 17:00pm Monday – Friday, case is allocated to a Housing Solutions Case Officer the same day to make initial contact with the child and understand reasons for presenting as homeless.

Social Worker will make contact with KHSS via Duty to Refer (with child's consent) or via the contact details outlined in the Protocol to advise of the child presenting as homeless and request joint assessment.

Arrange for joint assessment for 16- & 17-year-old within 24 hours of MARF referral being completed or referral being received from CSC.

If currently homeless or at risk of being homeless, HSS officer to complete a MARF referral via the MASH for the allocation of a social worker.

If the child needs accommodation overnight, CSC arranges it via the emergency access bed space

If KHSS are unable to visit until the next working day which may be a Monday, Social Worker should still arrange to visit child within 24 hours.

Initiate Child & Family Assessment to determine whether or not the child is owed duties under S17 or S20 of the CA 1989.

OUTCOMES

If the child needs accommodation overnight, KHSS arranges it via the emergency access bed space

Child requires accommodating – S20 of the CA 1989

If the child is found to be a CIN (S17) who is homeless and **wants to be accommodated**, then S20, the duty for CSC to accommodate, will be met. CSC will look to accommodate the child, rather than KHSS.

Child in need – S17 of the CA 1989

If the child is found to be 'in need' (S17), CSC will consider any additional requirements and complete a CIN plan. KHSS will comply with their homelessness duties and work with the child to secure a suitable housing option to relieve their homelessness and secure them somewhere safe to stay. KHSS will make an offer of accommodation to end the relief duty. This will in most cases be to a supported housing solution.

No further action

If the child found not to be 'in need' (S17) and no longer requires accommodating, CSC should look to refer to Early Help Services for support via Level 2 and Level. The case should only be closed when both parties are satisfied that the child is suitably accommodated and has access to appropriate support outside of the Council.






N.B Where the child refuses KHSS' offer of accommodation, KHSS will advise the child that the offer is a final offer, and that refusal will end the Council's relief duty owed to the child and that their case will be referred back to CSC via the MASH following the MARF process. The allocated Social Worker will then review the Child and Family Assessment and seek to implement alternative accommodation and support via S17. If KHSS cannot secure accommodation within 56 days of the relief duty being owed, they must then decide if the child became homeless intentionally or is owed a Main Duty. The two outcomes of this are:

- **Unintentionally homeless:** The child is owed the main housing duty. KHSS continues to seek suitable accommodation. This duty ends if the offer is accepted or refused. Refusal leads to referral back to the Social Worker (see 8.8)
- **Intentionally homeless:** The child is not owed the main duty and is referred back to CSC via the MASH.

Appendix D – 16/17 Young Persons Protocol – Crib Sheet

Crib Sheet: Homeless 16–17-Year-Olds **For MASH & Assessment Social Workers – In line with the Southwark Judgement**

Initial Screening (MASH) – Key Questions

-  Is the young person **actually homeless** or **at risk of homelessness**?
 -  Are they **able to live with family/friends** (even short-term)?
 -  What is the **reason for homelessness** (family breakdown, eviction, abuse)?
 -  Any **immediate risks/safeguarding concerns** (e.g. exploitation, mental health)?
 -  Does the young person have **immigration issues or NRPF**?
-

Legal Framework

Southwark Judgement (2009)

- A homeless 16–17-year-old is a **child in need** and **must be offered accommodation under Section 20**, unless:
 - They **refuse** this (must be fully informed).
 - They are **not actually homeless**.

Children Act 1989

Section

Key Points

S.17

Duty to assess and provide services to a "child in need". Doesn't confer accommodation rights.

S.20

Duty to accommodate a child **in need** who **requires accommodation**. Becomes a **Looked After Child** (LAC) with care planning, IRO, etc.

Assessment Process

Step 1: Immediate Safeguarding

- If **immediate danger**, **Section 47** strategy discussion and emergency accommodation.

Step 2: Child in Need Assessment

- Completed within 10 working days.
- Explore:
 - Capacity for safe reconnection with family.
 - Emotional/mental health.
 - Education, relationships, history.
 - Wishes & feelings of the young person.

Step 3: Offer of Section 20






- Clearly explain the **implications** of becoming LAC:
 - Social worker support.
 - Placement options.

- LAC review process.
- Impact on future (Leaving Care entitlement, pathway planning).
- If young person **refuses Section 20**:
- **Document informed decision.**
- Record explanation given (must be comprehensive and clear).
- **Section 17 support** may be provided (e.g. housing, mediation, outreach).

Accommodation Options

- If accepted under **S.20**:
 - Emergency foster/residential placement.
 - Ongoing care plan and placement stability planning.
- If supported under **S.17**:
 - Supported lodgings or semi-independent.
 - Close monitoring and follow-up support.

Key Practice Points

-  **No gatekeeping** – Must not automatically divert to housing services.
-  Young person's **wishes must be heard**, but refusal of S.20 must be informed.
-  Full **chronology of risks**, decisions, and offers must be documented.
-  Involve **housing, CAMHS, YOS, education** as part of holistic assessment.
-  **Southwark Judgement must be referenced** explicitly in case notes where relevant.

Useful Phrases for Recording

"In line with the Southwark Judgement, [Name] has been assessed as a child in need due to homelessness. A Section 20 offer has been made to accommodate them as a Looked After Child. The offer and implications were explained fully. [Name] has chosen to [accept/refuse] the offer and is aware of the legal implications of this decision."

"While [Name] has refused accommodation under Section 20, support will continue to be offered under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. This will include [list support] and ongoing monitoring of safety and welfare."

SUPPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTS - SEVEN MINUTE BRIEFING – 16/17 YEAR OLD HOMELESS PRESENTATIONS

To be used in conjunction with the Joint Homeless Prevention Protocol for Children aged 16 and 17
<https://www.knowsley.gov.uk/knowsleycouncil/media/Documents/Young-Persons-Protocol.pdf>

