



# Care Leaver Protocol

**Stockport Homes Group and Stockport Council**

**September 2026**

## **1. Aim of the Protocol**

- 1.1 Having a safe, secure, and stable place to call home is fundamental to every young person's wellbeing, sense of belonging, and future success. As committed Corporate Parents, Stockport Homes Group and Stockport Council are dedicated to providing high-quality accommodation, meaningful support, and opportunities that empower young people to flourish and reach their full potential.
- 1.2 Through this protocol, we set out how we will work together to turn our corporate parenting responsibilities into meaningful action, guided by the relevant legislative and strategic frameworks. It places young people at the heart of everything we do, recognising that a safe and stable home provides the foundation from which they can build their future. Equally important is our commitment to developing trusted, lasting relationships with care leavers, offering support that is individualised, respectful, and responsive to their aspirations, strengths, and changing needs.
- 1.3 Our shared commitment is to continually improve services and ensure that the voices, experiences and aspirations of young people remain central to decision making. We will listen to and learn from the lived experiences of care leavers, using their feedback to shape and strengthen our offer over time. Recognising that every young person's journey is unique, we will provide flexible, personalised support and bespoke interventions where needed, helping young people to achieve their goals, realise their potential and thrive in adulthood.
- 1.4 As a public document, the protocol ensures transparency and enables young people to understand the commitments made to them as care leavers. Its principles and promises are also reflected within the Care Leaver Local Offer, which brings together the support, opportunities, and services available. Together, these documents demonstrate our commitment to ensuring that young people are informed, empowered, and able to access the help they need to build positive futures with confidence and independence.

## **2. Scope of the Protocol**

The Protocol covers the following areas:

1. Corporate parenting and the values of this Protocol
2. The legislative and strategic framework
3. Exploring care leavers' accommodation and support options
4. Accessing housing and support
5. Care leavers and homelessness
6. Wellbeing, employment and wider aspirations
7. Review and dispute resolution

### **2.1 Key roles and responsibilities**

| Partner or role | Main responsibilities |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
|-----------------|-----------------------|

|                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Children's Social Care and Leaving Care Team    | Lead pathway planning, ensure Personal Adviser involvement, coordinate support, provide care leaver expertise and escalate risks where accommodation is not safe, suitable or sustainable. |
| Housing Options Service                         | Provide housing advice, complete homelessness assessments where required, develop Personalised Housing Plans and work with partners to prevent homelessness wherever possible.             |
| Stockport Homes Group housing and tenancy teams | Support access to social housing, tenancy readiness, tenancy sustainment, early intervention and prevention of avoidable eviction.                                                         |
| 16+ Multi-agency Accommodation Panel            | Oversee accommodation planning, unblock barriers, agree multi-agency actions and provide senior oversight for complex or escalating cases.                                                 |
| Senior managers                                 | Resolve disputes, authorise exceptional decisions, review cases where accommodation is at risk and ensure learning informs service improvement.                                            |

The accountable leads for this protocol are the Housing Options Team Leader and the Service Leader Leaving Care. They will be responsible for ensuring the protocol is embedded in practice and reviewed regularly.

**Escalation route:** Where operational issues, risks or disputes cannot be resolved at practitioner level, escalation should be through the accountable leads: the Housing Options Team Leader and the Service Leader Leaving Care.

**Embedding the protocol:** The protocol will be shared with relevant colleagues across Stockport Homes and the Leaving Care Team to support consistent understanding and application in practice. Relevant partnership events will also be used to promote the protocol, strengthen shared ownership and ensure partners understand the agreed pathways, responsibilities and escalation routes.

### 3. Corporate Parenting

3.1 Corporate parenting underpins this protocol with the Local Authority having the vision that:

*Children grow up in safe, stable and loving homes and are supported to go on to live safe, happy, healthy and successful lives as adults. (Corporate Parenting Strategy)*

3.2 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 (CSWA) outlines the corporate parenting principles that the Council and partners must take into account. These include:

- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and care leavers
- to encourage those children and care leavers to express their views, wishes and feelings

- to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and care leavers
- to help those children and care leavers gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
- to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and care leavers
- for those children and care leavers to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
- to prepare those children and care leavers for adulthood and independent living

3.3 Within Stockport, young people have also set priorities within the Corporate Parenting Strategy, with relevance to this Protocol:

- Stable and Loving Homes
- Feeling Safe
- Meaningful Relationships
- Healthy and Happy
- Education and Achieving Aspirations

3.4 As a result, this Protocol promotes an approach and culture that:

- Listens to young people and encourages them to express their wishes and feelings
- Gives honest, clear advice and information to enable decision making
- Offers choice as far as possible
- Recognises the role of positive relationships in sustaining accommodation
- Ensures young people are supported to develop the skills to sustain and thrive in accommodation
- Offers financial and practical assistance where needed

3.5 As Corporate Parents, Stockport Homes Group and Stockport Council recognise that, like all young people, care leavers will experience challenges, setbacks and times when they need additional support and understanding. The journey to independence is rarely straightforward. Through this Protocol, we commit to standing alongside care leavers with empathy, patience and compassion, ensuring they are not defined by mistakes but supported to learn from them. Our focus will be on helping young people overcome barriers, build on their strengths and achieve positive outcomes, with reassurance that support will remain available when they need it most.

## **4. Legislative and strategic framework**

4.1 This Protocol is framed within the context of relevant housing and social care legislation that outlines:

- Who qualifies as a care leaver
- Local authority duties to support and assist care leavers
- The concept of corporate parenting
- How local authorities decide how social housing is allocated
- The obligations towards people needing housing advice, homeless or threatened with homelessness

4.2 These are outlined within:

- Housing Act 1996 - Part 6 (Allocations) and Part 7 (Homelessness), as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002
- Children Act 1989
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Children and Social Work Act 2017 - sections 1, 2 and 3
- Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 - including the amendments relating to intentional homelessness decisions for eligible care leavers under the age of twenty-five from 30 September 2026

4.3 In addition, there is a range of statutory guidance relating to the legislation that local authorities must take into account. This includes:

- Homelessness Code of Guidance
  - Applying corporate parenting principles to looked after children and care leavers
  - Children Act 1989: care planning, placement and case review
  - Children Act 1989: transition to adulthood for care leavers
  - Extending Personal Adviser support for all care leavers to age 25
- Local Offer guidance
- The Supported Accommodation (England) Regulations 2023

4.4 Stockport Council's Homelessness Strategy and Corporate Parenting Strategy focus on developing services that meet the housing and support needs of care leavers, with a holistic approach reflected in both strategies.

Stockport Homes is one of the Greater Manchester Housing Providers who have co-developed a joint Care Leavers Pledge, supported and endorsed by the Mayor of Greater Manchester, which commits members to provide consistent and far-reaching support for young people leaving care. The pledge commits each housing provider to offer quality, stable homes to care leavers, alongside employment and skills opportunities, mentoring, and wider support in the transition from care to living independently. Support care leavers receive includes advice on money management, repairs rights advice, and life skills. The GMHP Care Leavers Pledge can be found at Annex D.

## **5. Exploring care leavers' accommodation and support options**

- 5.1 From the moment children become cared for by the local authority, Social Care will support them to develop the skills, confidence and experience needed for adult life. As with all young people, conversations will include their aspirations and accommodation options post-eighteen. This will be recorded and updated in each young person's Care Plan and Pathway Plan so plans are clear and can be reviewed over time.
- 5.2 In preparation for the transition to adult life, Social Care will ensure support and pathway planning includes the SKILLS programme to develop independent living skills, such as:

- Budgeting skills
- Managing family and personal relationships and self-care skills
- Developing positive support networks
- Practical and emotional living skills
- Accessing health and wellbeing services
- Developing self-esteem and a positive sense of identity
- Building resilience, positive attitudes, and behaviours
- Employment and training planning and support

5.3 This support will be delivered through a combination of formal and informal approaches, built upon dialogue and engagement with the young person and their carer/s.

5.4 When young people are 15 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> to 16 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> years old, Social Care will complete the 16+ Needs Assessment to support pathway planning for leaving care and accommodation options post-18. A Personal Adviser from the Leaving Care Service will be allocated around age 16 and will advise and support the assessment. Accommodation options for post-eighteen planning may include:

- Staying put – where a young person remains in a former foster carer post 18
- Supported lodgings - where a young person lives in a household as a lodger
- Specialist supported accommodation – where a young person has high level needs
- Residential provision - for the most complex young people
- Care leaver post-eighteen accommodation schemes, including Shaw Heath or Bridge Apartments
- Staying Close - support for care leavers leaving residential care and moving into supported or independent accommodation
- Living with family or friends
- University or further/higher education with linked accommodation
- Own tenancy in the social sector
- Private sector tenancy
- Purchasing their own homes

5.5 Each option will be discussed with the young person, enabling them to make informed decisions based on their circumstances, aspirations and the availability of accommodation. Pathway Plan Review Meetings, chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer, will oversee the young person's plans and help ensure they are ready to access the most appropriate accommodation option. The fortnightly 16+ multi-agency Accommodation Panel will also monitor progress and provide advice and consultation where needed.

5.6 The 16+ Accommodation Panel, chaired by the Service Leader, Leaving Care Services and including Housing Options representatives from Stockport Homes and other partner agencies, will ensure that each young person has a clear accommodation plan that they are working to for when they turn 18 years.

## **6. Accessing Stockport Homes / Social Housing**

6.1 Where a young person decides that they wish to access their own tenancy, they will make an application to Stockport Homes and have a meeting, known as a housing

assessment, with their Personal Adviser and a Housing Options Officer from Stockport Homes. The Personal Adviser will provide young people with information about Stockport's Coram Voice advocacy and support offer, and the benefits of accessing this in advance of the housing assessment.

- 6.2 Where a young person is leaving residential care or needs additional support with preparation for independent living, a referral will be discussed with them for Staying Close wraparound support and/or the House Project to support preparation for independent living skills.
- 6.3 The Housing Options Officer will explain the realities of living independently, the support available and the responsibilities involved in managing a tenancy. This will help the young person decide whether this is the option they wish to pursue and, with their Personal Adviser, identify the support needed to make the move a success.
- 6.4 A tenancy will usually be considered when a young person is approaching eighteen. It may be considered later, for example where a young person is leaving Staying Put or Supported Lodgings, or exceptionally for a slightly younger person. This enhanced process will apply to former relevant young people under Stockport Council. In exceptional circumstances, it may also apply to a qualifying care leaver or someone from out of borough who has been in the area since before their 16th birthday.
- 6.5 If the Housing Options Officer is satisfied that the young person will be able to sustain a tenancy, and the 16+ Accommodation Panel supports the rehousing process continuing, the young person will be added to the housing register.
- 6.6 The young person must meet the eligibility and qualifying criteria for the housing register. However, in line with the corporate parenting approach, flexibility may be applied when considering issues such as previous offending behaviour or rent arrears. This approach will also apply to general rehousing applications from care leavers under twenty-five, recognising that young people may make mistakes and should be supported to learn from them. The primary consideration will be whether the young person is able, with appropriate support where needed, to sustain a tenancy and manage independent living in the future.
- 6.7 Care leavers are prioritised for housing through Stockport Council's Allocation Policy which makes provision for additional priority where the applicant is aged under twenty-five and is an eligible, relevant or former relevant care leaver who has spent a period of, or periods amounting to, at least thirteen weeks in care in England or Wales since their fourteenth birthday, of which at least one day was since becoming sixteen, and who is in urgent housing need. This provides an extra award of points to give additional priority to care leavers in urgent housing need, enabling them to be considered for rehousing ahead of applicants who are not assessed as being in need. Additional local priority points may also be awarded for relevant local priority factors, whether or not the young person is otherwise assessed as being in housing need. Eligible, relevant and former relevant care leavers aged sixteen to twenty-four do not have to satisfy local connection tests where they have spent a period of, or periods amounting to, at least thirteen weeks in care in England or Wales since their fourteenth birthday, of which at least one day was since attaining the age of sixteen. This recognises the corporate parenting responsibilities owed to care leavers and supports

access to rehousing without requiring them to demonstrate a separate local connection.

- 6.8 Young people will be able to bid for properties through Homechoice, the choice-based lettings scheme. In addition, the Housing Options Officer will request a direct let from the Stockport Homes Property Management Team where this is appropriate. Any direct let request will be considered in line with the Allocation Policy and informed by discussion with the young person and their Personal Adviser. The location and type of property will take account of support networks, access to education, training or employment, safety, affordability and any other relevant support needs. The young person will be given clear and realistic information about the availability of accommodation and the options.
- 6.9 Before any offer is made, the relevant Neighbourhood Housing Officer will complete property checks to ensure there are no significant anti-social behaviour concerns or other issues that would make the accommodation unsuitable. The offer may be made by Stockport Homes or through a nomination to a partner housing provider. If a young person refuses an offer, they will not be penalised automatically. The reasons for the refusal will be explored with them and their Personal Adviser, including any concerns about safety, suitability, location or support needs. The young person will also be given clear information about the limited availability of accommodation. Where refusals continue and no clear resolution has been agreed, a joint meeting will be arranged with the young person and relevant professionals to agree a planned way forward.
- 6.10 Once an independent tenancy is being sought, the young person will be referred to the Tenancy Ready Team at Stockport Homes. The team will work with the young person and their Personal Adviser to develop a support plan for the period leading up to the move into a new home. The Personal Adviser will request the £3,000 setting up home grant and support the young person to make a support fund application for white goods of approximately £1,000. This support will have a practical focus on setting up home, ensuring everything is in place, providing reassurance and maintaining links with other relevant services. A clear three-way plan between the young person, Stockport Homes and the Personal Adviser is needed to avoid duplication and ensure clarity around responsibilities.
- 6.11 When moving into the new home, a Stockport Homes support worker or Personal Adviser will always be present. The terms of the tenancy agreement, rights and responsibilities must already have been covered with the young person in preparation. Moving home can be stressful for anyone, particularly for someone living independently for the first time, so additional time and support may be needed to meet the young person's needs.
- 6.12 In addition to assistance from Stockport Council through its comprehensive and wide-ranging leaving care offer, Stockport Homes can arrange:
- Access to Stockport Homes' furniture recycling scheme
  - Six months free membership of the nearest Pantry Scheme (co-operative food scheme offering around £15 of food for a £4.50 membership fee)
  - Access to Stockport Homes' Counselling Scheme
  - Employment advice and support

- Money advice sessions
  - Access to the Special Housing Fund (Stockport Homes and Council)
- 6.13 Ongoing housing support is also available for as long as needed, in agreement with the young person and their Personal Adviser, to ensure support is provided at the right level and duplication is avoided.
- 6.14 Before signing for a tenancy, young people will be asked if they consent to having a care leaver marker applied to the Stockport Homes housing management system. This enables relevant staff to identify that someone is a care leaver and to offer additional support, or liaise with the Personal Adviser, if there are difficulties with the tenancy.
- 6.15 The care leaver marker will support Stockport Homes to apply the minimising evictions protocol, which requires all reasonable options to be explored before possession action is considered. Where the tenant is a care leaver, this will be treated as a significant factor and, with the young person's consent wherever possible, the Leaving Care Team will be involved at the earliest opportunity. Stockport Homes and the Leaving Care Team will work together to provide coordinated support, address tenancy concerns and prevent avoidable eviction. Where a care leaver is at risk of eviction, or further support is needed to sustain the tenancy, managers from Stockport Homes and the Council will convene an urgent planning meeting to agree a clear support plan, actions, responsibilities and next steps.
- 6.16 If the young person is applying for an early tenancy under 18 years old, the flow chart **Annex A** outlines the steps to be taken to be satisfied this is an appropriate plan for the young person and for ensuring registration with Ofsted under the supported accommodation (England) regulations 2023.

## **7. Care leavers and homelessness**

- 7.1 Stockport Homes is committed to preventing homelessness for care leavers and recognises that a positive, well-planned transition from care is essential to reducing future accommodation difficulties. Supporting young people at this key stage is a priority, underpinned by early investment, coordinated planning and ongoing support, including access to a Personal Adviser up to the age of twenty-five.
- 7.2 Where a young person is at risk of homelessness, the Council and Stockport Homes will work collaboratively to resolve the situation. Information will be shared with the young person's consent wherever possible. Where consent is not available, information sharing must be considered in line with relevant lawful bases, including safeguarding, vital interests, legal obligation or public task, and should be proportionate, necessary and clearly recorded. If the young person is aged over twenty-one and not currently receiving support from a Personal Adviser, the Leaving Care Team will offer a Needs Assessment and support where the young person is willing to accept it.

Support may include:

- Mediation with family, friends or landlords.

- Consider the Duty to Refer and, where appropriate, make a referral to the Housing Options Service with consent or another clearly recorded lawful basis for sharing information.
- A homelessness assessment to determine whether the prevention or relief duty applies and take timely action to prevent homelessness or secure accommodation. Where there is a duty, a Personalised Housing Plan will be developed jointly with the care leaver to address their housing situation.
- Where needs are complex, responses will be coordinated through multi-disciplinary working involving Stockport Homes, Leaving Care, Social Care, health, and commissioned support services to ensure accommodation and wider support needs are addressed holistically.
- Financial help to address arrears from the Council or Stockport Homes, with a clear approach to addressing the underlying cause of financial issues with the young person.
- Engagement of the Positive Engagement Team at Stockport Homes where anti-social behaviour is an issue.
- Intensive housing support, money advice and help with addressing loneliness and isolation.
- Engagement with a Domestic Abuse Worker.
- Referral or consultation with the Aspire Team where there are concerns about exploitation.
- Making a direct offer of an alternative tenancy under this protocol where the location is not sustainable for the young person.
- Escalation to the 16+ Accommodation Panel before any eviction decision in exceptional circumstances.

7.3 Stockport Homes will follow the statutory framework when taking homelessness applications and making relevant decisions, while having regard to the specific challenges faced by care leavers. Strong consideration will be given to the priority need status of young people aged 21 to 25 who have been in care. From 30 September 2026, eligible care leavers under the age of twenty-five can no longer be found intentionally homeless by local housing authorities under amendments made by the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026. This means that any homelessness assessment for an eligible care leaver under twenty-five must proceed on the basis that the intentional homelessness limitation does not apply.

7.5 Where there is no legal duty to accommodate a care leaver under twenty-five, or where that duty is limited, Stockport Homes and the Council will use their corporate parenting responsibilities to work together to identify a safe and suitable accommodation pathway. Any decision that accommodation cannot be provided because risks cannot currently be managed safely, there are serious safety concerns, or the young person is not currently able to comply with licence requirements must be reviewed by senior managers from Stockport Homes and the Council. Even where risks are significant, partners will continue to work with the young person to identify a route back into accommodation and ensure services are coordinated.

7.4 Care leavers aged twenty-one and over are not automatically in priority need for housing. Priority need must be assessed on an individual basis, with consideration of vulnerability in line with relevant case law, including whether the person would be significantly more vulnerable than an ordinary person if homeless. Stockport Homes

and Leaving Care Services will work jointly to inform the assessment, taking account of corporate parenting responsibilities, care history, health, safeguarding, support needs and any barriers to independent living.

- 7.5 Assessment processes and accommodation provided for care leavers will comply with Chapter 22 of the Homelessness Code of Guidance and relevant Children Act guidance, with a particular objective of avoiding the use of hotel or bed and breakfast accommodation. Stockport Homes and the Leaving Care Team adopt a shared understanding that bed and breakfast accommodation will not be used for care leavers along with a strategic approach to emergency accommodation, housing and support pathways for young people. Where there is a shortage of appropriate placements, this will be flagged at the 16+ multi-agency Accommodation Panel to explore short- and long-term options in the young person's best interests.
- 7.6 It is recognised that some young people will take longer to adapt to independent living than others and that transition is an ongoing process. Ongoing support and a corporate parenting approach will help ensure that appropriate supported housing options, strategies and individual plans are developed until the young person is ready and settled.

## **7.7 Care leavers who are rough sleeping**

- 7.7.1 Care leavers who are identified as sleeping rough, sofa surfing, or at high risk of rough sleeping will be treated as a priority. Early identification and rapid, coordinated intervention will be undertaken jointly by Stockport Homes, Children's and Adult Social Care, and commissioned support services to prevent homelessness and promote stability.
- 7.7.2 Where a care leaver is known to be sleeping rough or at imminent risk, an urgent assessment will be completed to establish immediate accommodation need, safeguarding risks, and wider support requirements. Support will be provided to secure suitable emergency or temporary accommodation without delay, alongside access to floating support, health services, and specialist care leaver provision as appropriate. A coordinated support plan will be agreed, led by the care leaver's Personal Adviser where applicable, to support sustained accommodation and address underlying needs.
- 7.7.3 For care leavers with a local connection to another local authority, and where informed consent is given, staff will support the individual to contact their parent local authority. This will include facilitating information sharing, joint planning, and advocacy to ensure continuity of corporate parenting responsibilities and access to accommodation and support. No care leaver will be left without interim support while such contact and arrangements are being made.

## **8. Care leavers with additional needs**

Care leavers with additional needs may require a more tailored and coordinated accommodation response. This may include young people with disabilities, neurodiversity,

mental health needs, substance use, experience of exploitation, domestic abuse, offending, self-neglect or safeguarding concerns. Support should be strengths based, trauma informed and focused on managing risk collaboratively rather than excluding young people from accommodation, unless there is an immediate risk that cannot be safely managed.

Where additional needs are identified, Stockport Homes, Leaving Care, Adult Social Care, health, safeguarding and commissioned support services will agree a coordinated plan. This should include reasonable adjustments, communication needs, risk management arrangements, named lead professionals, review dates and clear escalation routes if accommodation is at risk.

## **9. Care leavers in custody**

- 9.1 Stockport Homes and the Leaving Care Team recognise the importance of early planning for care leavers who are due to be released from custody, to support a smooth transition into safe and suitable accommodation.
- 9.2 Stockport Homes will work with the Leaving Care Team, youth offending services, probation, prisons, secure children's homes, secure training centres and any relevant accommodation providers to ensure the accommodation needs of care leavers leaving custody are identified early and addressed. An accommodation plan should be in place before release wherever possible. Further guidance is available within the Youth Justice Resettlement Strategy.
- 9.3 Relevant custodial and youth justice services are subject to the Duty to Refer under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and should refer, with the young person's consent, to Stockport Homes if they consider that the young person may be homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days. On receipt of a referral, Stockport Homes will liaise with the Leaving Care Team and, where needed, arrange contact with the young person to agree reasonable steps to prevent homelessness on release.
- 9.4 When a care leaver is due for release from custody, a planning meeting will be held six weeks prior to the release date with all relevant agencies, including probation, youth offending services, the Personal Adviser and Housing Options. This will inform the assessment of needs and help identify appropriate accommodation and support on release.
- 9.5 The young person's circumstances will be presented to the 16+ multi-agency Accommodation Panel for advice and consultation about accommodation options. Any additional services, support needs, funding or resources will be considered and actioned through the panel as appropriate.
- 9.6 If there is imminent or actual homelessness, the young person will be supported to make a homelessness application without delay.

## **10. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking care leavers**

- 10.1 Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children without leave to remain are unable to apply for Stockport Homes accommodation and advice should be sought from the 16+ Accommodation Panel for accommodation options in these circumstances.

- 10.2 Once leave to remain is granted, an appointment will be made with the Housing Options Team, who will make an assessment under homelessness legislation. The former unaccompanied asylum-seeking child will be supported by their Personal Adviser to attend any appointments, arrange interpreters where appropriate and make referrals for support services.

## **11. Equality, intersectionality and trauma informed practice**

- 11.1 Stockport Homes and the Council recognise that every young person's journey is unique and may be shaped by factors including disability, neurodiversity, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, trauma, family relationships, health, caring responsibilities and experience of discrimination. Support will be tailored to individual need, with reasonable adjustments made where required. Staff will use a trauma informed, strengths based and culturally sensitive approach, drawing on specialist services, community resources and advocacy where appropriate.

## **12. Care leaver parents**

- 12.1 If a care leaver is pregnant, they can be supported to apply to Stockport Homes for two-bedroom accommodation.
- 12.2 If a care leaver is already living in Stockport Homes accommodation, they should speak with their Neighbourhood Housing Officer for advice and support.

## **13. Wellbeing, employment, and wider aspirations**

- 13.1 Stockport Homes and the Council recognise that feeling safe, settled and listened to provides the foundation for young people to move forward and develop in other areas of their lives. In addition to their role as corporate parents, both organisations are committed to providing holistic support and opportunities for engagement, including:
- Employment and apprenticeships advice and opportunities
  - Volunteering and work experience opportunities
  - Targeted work around positive relationships and domestic abuse
  - Access to counselling and mental health support
  - Community involvement, networking and addressing loneliness
  - Promoting health and wellbeing services
  - Supporting care leaver events and action weeks

## **14. Protocol review and resolution of disputes**

- 14.1 This Protocol will be formally reviewed on an annual basis at the start of the financial year or following a change in legislation, guidance or service provision. The views of young people will be included in the review through the Bright Spots Survey and Leaving Care Forum. Any amendments will be agreed between the Head of Homelessness Services and the Head of Social Care and Commissioning. The review will feed back into the Children in our Care Board and Corporate Parents Working Group, with a review of outcomes from the past financial year.

- 14.2 Practitioners working with care leavers who require accommodation may encounter professional disagreements from time to time. While this can be appropriate, such differences must not negatively affect outcomes for children and young people. Care leavers will also be able to access independent advice from Coram Voice advocacy and support services.
- 14.3 The process for resolving practitioner disagreements should first involve workers consulting colleagues to clarify their thinking and practice. Where differences cannot be resolved, matters will be referred to the relevant Leaving Care Team Leader and Housing Options Team Leader for discussion, resolution and agreement. Cases raised in this way will also be considered at the fortnightly Accommodation Panel to ensure learning is shared and wider protocol or service level issues are identified.
- 14.4 Disputes remaining unresolved will be considered by the Head of Homelessness Services and Head of Service, Children's Services, for discussion, resolution and agreement. They will also consider any wider issues at a protocol or service level.
- 14.5 The annual review will consider evidence from practice, young people's feedback and performance information. This should include, where available, care leavers who have approached as homeless, care leavers placed in temporary accommodation, rough sleeping incidents, evictions prevented, tenancy sustainment outcomes, disputes escalated and resolved, use of out of area accommodation and learning from complaints or advocacy.

## **The Agreement**

This document is a formal agreement of arrangements, between Children's Social Care and Stockport Homes Group. The agreement addresses the key principles and issues. This agreement will be reviewed in full at the request of either partner.

| <b>Stockport Homes Group</b>                              | <b>Stockport Family</b>                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Name: Sarah Smith<br>Head of Homelessness Services        | Name: Jeanette Warburton<br>Head of Service, Children's Services |
| Key Contact: Sarah Higgins<br>Housing Options Team Leader | Key Contact: Clare Bibby<br>Service Leader Leaving Care          |

## **Annex A**

Flowchart for children in care under 18 years moving into early single occupancy Stockport Homes accommodation and registration with Ofsted under the Supported Accommodation Regulations 2023.

## **Annex B – Options for care leavers over twenty-one and not in priority need**

This annex should be read in line with Stockport's corporate parenting responsibilities. Even where no accommodation duty is owed, partners will continue to work with the young person to identify safe, realistic and sustainable housing options.

If a care leaver aged twenty-one or over is not considered to be in priority need, they would not be owed a duty to be provided with emergency accommodation. The following circumstances are reasons why someone would be considered to be automatically in priority need:

- They have dependent children who are primarily resident with the applicant.
- They are pregnant.
- They are homeless as a result of flood, fire or other disaster.
- Care leaver aged 18 to 20.
- Person aged 16 to 17.
- Homeless due to being the victim of domestic abuse.

Some care leavers over twenty-one may be considered to be in priority need, if they are significantly more vulnerable than the ordinary person. The following would be reasons why someone may be considered to be more vulnerable:

- Physical or mental health
- Old age
- Learning disability
- Someone at risk of exploitation, including human trafficking or modern slavery
- Care leaver aged twenty-one or over who is vulnerable as a result of their time in care
- Ex-Armed Forces personnel who is vulnerable as a result of their time in the armed forces
- Someone leaving custody who is vulnerable as a result of their time in custody
- Someone who is vulnerable due to fleeing threats of violence (other than domestic abuse) which are likely to be carried out
- Any other special reason

Where someone is not considered to be in priority need, Stockport's Allocation Policy still provides 30 Homeless points. This means they can continue to be considered for rehousing through the housing register, although a direct let would not usually be available on homelessness grounds alone. Due to the high level of demand for social housing, securing an offer may take time and may be challenging. Housing Options and the Leaving Care Team will therefore continue to work with the young person to explore all realistic and suitable housing options, including social housing, private rented accommodation and other accommodation routes, with support provided to help them make informed choices.

The following accommodation options would be explored:

## **Privately Rented**

Homelessness Services can support young people to explore privately rented accommodation where this is a suitable and affordable option. This may include help with a deposit and rent in advance. Because private rents in Stockport can be high, options outside the borough may sometimes provide a more realistic route to securing settled accommodation, although this will always be discussed carefully with the young person and take account of their support networks, safety, education, employment and wider wellbeing. The amount someone can receive from Universal Credit towards their rent is based on the Local Housing Allowance, which varies depending on income, age and location. For example, Local Housing Allowance rates differ between areas such as Stockport and central London, reflecting differences in local rental costs.

Care leavers under the age of twenty-five are entitled to receive the one-bedroom local housing allowance. The Local Housing Allowance for other locations can be found via here - <https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/> while Stockport's rates (which also covers part of High Peak and Trafford) are shown below:

| <b>Room</b>    | <b>Weekly</b>  | <b>Monthly</b> |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Shared rate    | £94.72         | £411.58        |
| <b>One bed</b> | <b>£143.84</b> | <b>£625.02</b> |
| Two bed        | £172.60        | £749.99        |
| Three bed      | £207.12        | £899.99        |
| Four bed       | £322.19        | £1399.99       |

## **Options out of area**

Housing Options can support young people to explore referrals or applications to accommodation providers outside the borough where this may offer a suitable, safe and realistic housing option. Any out of area option will be discussed carefully with the young person and their Personal Adviser, taking account of their views, support networks, safety, education, employment, health and wider wellbeing.

## **AMRP North East Housing**

Provides affordable rented accommodation across the North East of England. Applicants must complete a short application form, with processing typically taking around two weeks. If approved, applicants are offered a choice of suitable properties.

 0191 640 4604

 [www.amrp.co.uk](http://www.amrp.co.uk)

 Ferryhill, County Durham

**Midlands Living (Midland Livings CIC)**

Offers supported accommodation with shared facilities in Birmingham. Housing Options can make referrals, and accommodation may be available immediately.

 07895 654560

 [www.midland-livings.co.uk](http://www.midland-livings.co.uk)

 Birmingham

**Accent Group**

A national housing association with properties available across England. Homes are advertised through Accent Re-Lets and Rightmove.

 0345 678 0555

 [www.accentgroup.org](http://www.accentgroup.org)

**Onward Homes**

Provides social housing across Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Merseyside and Lancashire. Available properties can be searched using their online filtering tool.

 0300 555 0600

 [www.onward.co.uk/find-a-home](http://www.onward.co.uk/find-a-home)

**The Guinness Partnership**

A national housing association advertising homes that are available immediately. Current vacancies are advertised via Zoopla, and enquiries can be made directly through property listings.

 0303 123 1890

 [www.guinnesspartnership.com](http://www.guinnesspartnership.com)

 Zoopla: [www.zoopla.co.uk/find-agents/branch/the-guinness-partnership-oldham-66758/](http://www.zoopla.co.uk/find-agents/branch/the-guinness-partnership-oldham-66758/)

Annex D

# GMHP Care Leavers Pledge

## A range of homes We will / we aim to:



- 1** Ensure young people leaving care have easy access to a range of accommodation that meets their needs
- 2** Ensure that young people know their rights and understand their tenancy agreement
- 3** Tailor our tenancy sign-up procedures to support young people to understand them fully
- 4** Prevent homelessness - we will support young people leaving care to sustain their tenancy, to learn the necessary skills to maintain a home
- 5** Work with our suppliers to provide furniture packages to young people with reduced income

## Life skills and mentoring We will / we aim to:



- 1** Support young people to connect with others who have lived experience, to encourage and promote their wellbeing
- 2** Support young people to connect with their community and to utilise local assets
- 3** Signpost young people to partners that offer a range of activities / events
- 4** We support young people to learn how to manage their finances and increase their income

## Employment and skills We will / we aim to:



- 1** Offer work skills training, support into employment and apprenticeships to all our young people
- 2** We will offer an enhanced support package when a care leaver commences employment with us, such as a peer mentor
- 3** We will raise awareness within our organisation about the needs of young people

## Supported by

*Andy Burnham*

**Andy Burnham**  
Mayor of Greater Manchester

*Paul Marshall*

**Paul Marshall**  
Chair of GM Care Leavers

*Jon Lord*

**Jon Lord**  
Chair of GMHP



**Greater Manchester**  
Housing Providers