

### **Are you 16 or 17 and homeless or at risk of becoming homeless?**

This leaflet has been given to you because you are 16 or 17, you can't live at home with your parents or carers and you are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

If this is the situation you are in, you may be able to get help from Lancashire county Council Children's Social care or your local (District) Council housing department. The voluntary sector in your area may also be able to help – go to the [Youth Zone Leaving Home](#) webpage for further information.

### **What should you do?**

You should speak to someone you trust and can talk to. This could be:

- A teacher or tutor
- A youth worker or support worker – this might be your support worker from the Children and Family and Wellbeing Service
- A social worker from Children's Social Care
- A housing advice worker from your District Council's housing department
- A homeless prevention or advice service

They should help you look at possible options, such as:

- Sorting things out and going back home
- Living with other relatives like a gran or uncle or sister for a while
- Anywhere else you could go and live
- How your District Council's housing department or Children's Social Care might be able to help you

Don't worry about talking to a professional and don't be afraid to ask questions so that you understand what is happening.

If you are 16 or 17 and you are homeless, Children's Social Care must assess your needs and you will be involved in the decision making. If you are found to be homeless then Children's Social Care will offer you the opportunity to become looked after. If they do not, you have the right to challenge this. If you decide that you do not want to become looked after then you should still receive support from Children's Social Care as a child in need and you can still get support from your District Council housing department, which will largely focus on addressing your housing needs.

It does not matter if you go to Children's Social Care or the District Council housing department. If you go to the housing department, they should refer you to Children's Social Care to be assessed – this will be a "joint assessment" between District housing and Children's Social Care to find the best options for you.

## **Family Group Conference**

It may be possible for you and your carers to access Family Group Conference Support. This is one way of trying to resolve the issues that you and your family are experiencing and can help you to talk to each other. If you would like this, please read the leaflet attached to this leaflet or you can ask your social worker or support worker from the Children and Family Wellbeing Service.

If you are uncertain about what is best for you, you can contact an advice service such as [Shelter](#) which offers an online chat service and free helpline, open 365 days a year.

## **What happens if I become looked after?**

Children's Social Care must provide you with accommodation under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 if the assessment shows that:

- You are a child in need
- You need somewhere to live because there are no adults who can provide you with safe accommodation

Children's Social Care will find a place for you in semi-independent accommodation, residential accommodation, supported housing or in foster care. The type of accommodation you will be given will depend on your age and your needs, including access to your support networks and family where appropriate.

If you become looked after, Children's Social Care must not just give you somewhere to live; they will look after you in other ways too. This will include things like keeping you safe and helping you do as well as you can, looking at your education, health, financial support, contact with your family and friends (if you want that) and any other needs that you have.

You have the right to take some time to think about being a looked after child and can talk this through with someone you trust to help explain things. If you need additional support and would like an Advocate, please ask your social worker or Children and Family Support Worker.

*Please note, permission should be sought from the young person before a referral to the children's advocacy service is made.*

You can find further advice on the [Youth Zone Leaving Home](#) webpage.

## **Jargon Buster**

**Advocate** - An advocate will meet with you and focus on what the problems are and what you would like to happen. They will inform you of your rights and make sure your voice is heard. Your advocate may also help you to make a complaint if things have not been sorted out and you feel this is something that you wish to do.

**Assessment** - A close look at your situation, your needs and what support you may need.

**Care (being in care, being looked after)** - Being in care or being a looked after child means the same thing.

A child or young person can be in care for three main reasons:

- If there is a care order saying that Children's Social Care should look after them.
- If the parents, or the young person if they are aged 16 or 17, agree that Children's Social Care will look after them.
- If young people aged between 12–17 are living on a secure remand in a secure children's home, a Secure Training Centre or a Young Offender Institution.

It doesn't matter where they are living, i.e. living in foster care, a children's home, in semi-independent accommodation or even at home.

**Care Plan** - A plan made when you are in care about your immediate and long term future based on your needs assessment\*. This should cover: personal support, accommodation, education and training, employment, family and social relationships, practical and other skills, financial support, health needs. You should play a key role in devising your care plan.

**Child in Need** - A child or young person who needs help from Children's Social Care to make sure that they have a reasonable standard of physical or mental health or development. Children with disabilities are always considered to be children in need.

**Pathway Plan** - It is very similar to a Care Plan (see above) but it is more focused on preparing you to live independently.

**Priority Need** - A term used by the District Council housing department to identify who should have priority accessing council housing.

**Review** - A look at previous assessments and decisions made about your care to check that things are still relevant and/or needed, and to make changes if necessary. There is usually a meeting with the people involved in your life.