



# Young People's Housing and Independence Pathway Plan

## Summary of draft plan for consultation – July to October 2016

### Executive summary

This plan sets out proposals for a new positive pathway approach in Bristol to support young people to remain living in their family networks, or help them access and sustain suitable housing where living with their family is not possible.

The plan includes:

- Proposals to change the way we work so that we are better at helping young people and their families to prevent housing crisis and/or enable young people to access the housing and support they need in a more planned way.
- Commissioning proposals about how we will secure the accommodation and support needed for Bristol care leavers as well as young people at risk of homelessness.

Our proposed plan is based on the 2015 positive pathway framework developed by the youth homelessness charity St Basil's.<sup>1</sup> Our aim is to work more effectively across the council, and with partners, to provide an integrated approach to:

- Make sure young people, their families and support workers have information and guidance to understand housing options and plan when and how young people leave home or leave care.
- Prevent housing crisis and support young people to return home where safe, including returning home from care.
- Ensure processes, including assessment and allocation of housing, are clear to young people and help them to access the most appropriate service to meet their needs.
- Have a suitable range of accommodation and support options.
- Help young people with settled accommodation, which will usually need to be shared.

Currently, we spend around £3.2M per year on these services. The council faces considerable budget pressures and all service areas are under pressure to reduce expenditure.

### Consultation - 25<sup>th</sup> July to 17<sup>th</sup> October 2016

We are consulting people on this draft plan and are keen to get views from children in care, care leavers, other young service users, landlords, providers and other practitioners working with young people.

The consultation period will last for 12 weeks between 25<sup>th</sup> July and 17<sup>th</sup> October 2016. Following this, we will consider feedback and make revisions to the plan. The final plan will be agreed by the Mayor, probably in January 2017.

### Who is the new pathway for

It aims to meet the needs of more vulnerable young people including:

- 16-17 year olds at risk of homelessness and/or who become children in care.
- Care leavers up to 21 years old (or 24 if particularly vulnerable, disabled or in education).
- 18-21 year olds at risk of homelessness with additional support needs.
- 22-24 year olds at risk of homelessness with a learning difficulty, disability or other reason making them particularly vulnerable.
- Pregnant young women and young parents at risk of homelessness with high support needs.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.stbasils.org.uk/files/2015-08-35/10\\_FINAL\\_pathwaysA4\\_booklet\\_98812.pdf](http://www.stbasils.org.uk/files/2015-08-35/10_FINAL_pathwaysA4_booklet_98812.pdf)

## What young people have told us

### What care leavers told us about housing

**Family & social relationships** - Many care leavers were positive about making new friends, being able to have their friends round and being with their biological family. Others felt isolated and missed their friends and foster families. Some were concerned about forming new friendships with unsuitable people in supported accommodation.

**Independence** – Independence and living alone is highly prized by many care leavers but the downside is social isolation and exposure to risks. Care leavers do not always feel ready to live alone and some said they needed more support to do so.

**Preparation & support**- Care leavers feel they need better preparation for moving on and leaving care. Careful planning, a slower transition and training flats would help them make a more successful move. Many need and value continuing support.

**Cost, safety & standard of accommodation** – Care leavers feel their housing doesn't always provide a safe environment, and isn't always of a suitable standard or type appropriate to them. Care leavers need financial support when starting out and continuing guidance to prevent getting into arrears.

### What young people in supported accommodation told us

#### Strengths of supported accommodation

- Some younger residents feel well supported.
- Some young people find living with their peers to be a positive influence and support.
- Some accommodation is in good locations and feels safe.
- Don't feel judged.

#### Weaknesses of supported accommodation

- Standard of accommodation often poor.
- Culture of residents using extreme behaviour to get support.
- Young people often feel neglected.
- Can feel surrounded by negative influences.
- High staff turnover.

#### Processes

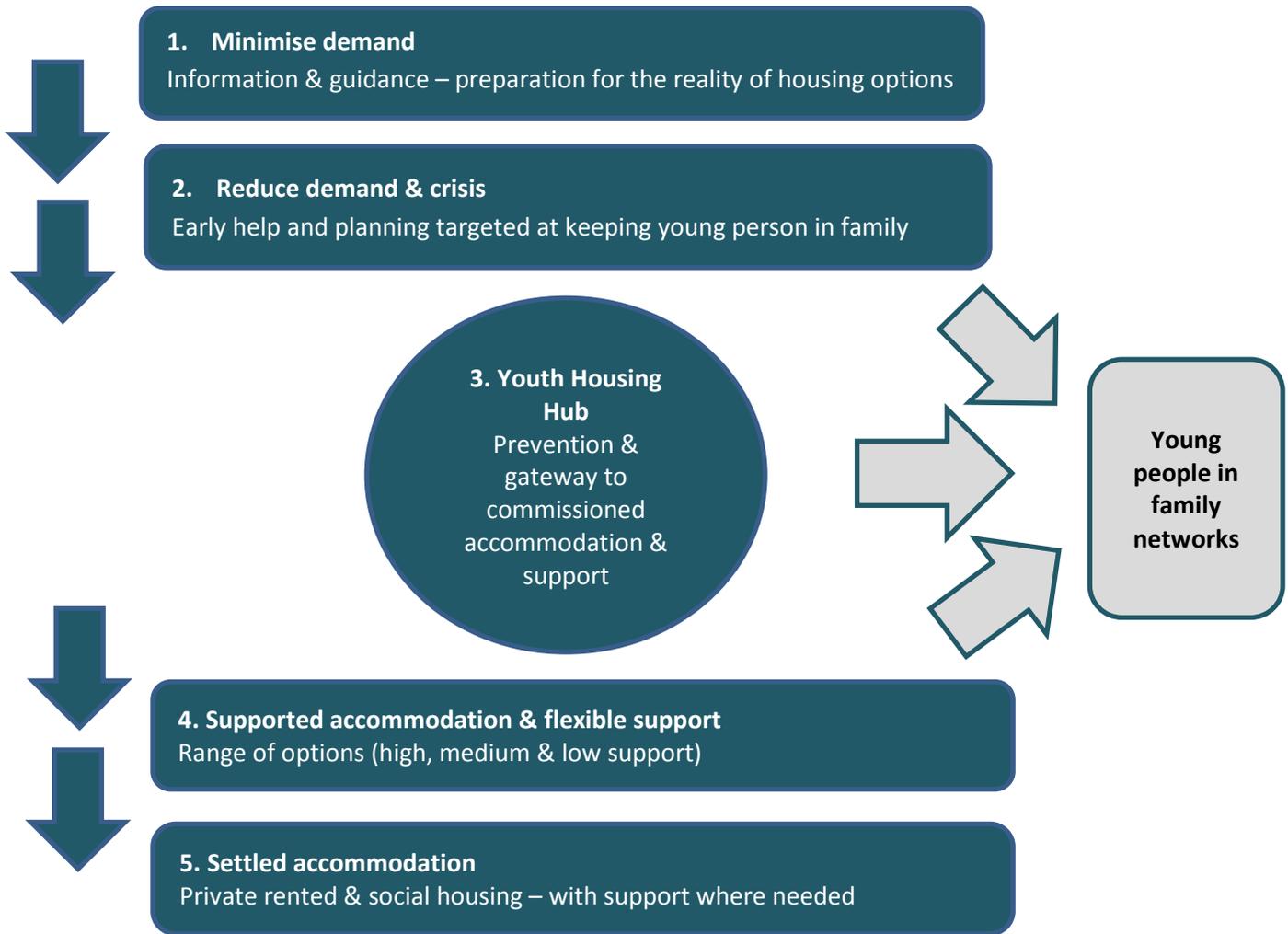
- Unsure where to go or what to do next.
- Not informed of how the pathway / system works.
- Do not understand why they were referred to a particular service.
- Rarely given options.
- It's good to have somewhere to stay when you need it.

#### Suggested improvements

- Younger residents (16-18 years) would prefer to live with this age group only.
- Give clear explanations about living in the accommodation, including service rules, tenancy agreement, rights and outcomes.
- Crashpads shouldn't be used for more than one or two nights.
- Ensure young people are well informed about move on options and plan for the future, including for employment, training and education.

## New positive pathway approach - overview

Our proposed pathway will operate over five areas as set out below.



The following sections describe each stage of the proposed pathway.

### Stage 1 Minimise demand - preparation for the reality of housing options

- We will establish a Youth Housing Hub (see stage 3) to coordinate the provision of information, advice and guidance. This will include supporting people who work with and advise young people and families to better understand housing options (e.g. First Response, Early Help teams, and children in care social workers).
- We will communicate clear messages about the reality of housing options, emphasising the importance of sharing and accessing the private rented sector.
- We will provide independence training to children in care and care leavers who are 'staying put'.
- We will arrange for young people in care to have opportunities to practise living independently and sharing their accommodation (e.g. in student accommodation during holidays).
- We will make sure that all young people in care have a housing pathway plan included in their pathway plan, prepared at least six months before they will leave their care placement.
- We will commission peer education in schools, targeted at those most at risk of homelessness.

## Stage 2 - Reduce demand and crisis – early help and planning to keep young person in family

- The Youth Housing Hub (see stage 3) will coordinate prevention and early intervention for young people at risk of homelessness, including triage so that help goes to those who most need it.
- Each point of contact with a young person and each referral will be focused on keeping the young person in their family where safe to do so – this will include helping older teenagers in care to return to live with their families. This whole-family approach will require culture change across the council and other organisations that work with young people, to develop a commitment to working with young people in the context of their families.
- We will commission effective mediation and other help to support families to stay together and/or avoid young people going into housing crisis.
- We will commission Nightstop arrangements for stays of up to 45 days for young people to have a family-based respite option while family reunification is explored with the family.
- For young people in care who are not able to stay with their foster family, including young people in children's homes, we will make sure there is early joint planning of their housing options – with the young people, their social worker and a housing adviser.

## Stage 3 Youth Housing Hub - Prevention and gateway to commissioned accommodation & support

- A more detailed design for the Hub and business case will be developed during the consultation period. We will involve young people in the design process.
- The Hub is likely to be a virtual or co-located team, including council staff and one or more external providers, coordinating and/or delivering the following services:
  - Prevention – information and guidance, mediation and family group conferencing, peer education in schools. Outreach support for young people at risk of homelessness.
  - Assessment – Holistic assessments of all young people presenting at risk of homelessness, including home visits. This will include a joined up approach to Part VII<sup>2</sup> and s.20<sup>3</sup> assessments of 16-17 year olds.
  - Advice on housing options – For young people, their families and workers as well as training for advisers and workers.
  - Allocation of housing and support – Joint planning for care leavers and offenders. Controlling access to supported accommodation, including prioritisation. Managing voids and move on. Preventing evictions from supported accommodation.
  - Achieving positive outcomes – Help to access employment, education and training, to get private rented accommodation and helping young people to successfully share housing.

## Stage 4 Supported accommodation and flexible support – range of options

### Proposals – for accommodation and support

We aim to make sure there is a suitable range of supported accommodation options to meet young people's varying needs. The diagram below summarises what we propose to commission.

Each young person will enter the accommodation pathway at the appropriate level of support to meet their needs. The first step for a young person not known to the council is likely to be an emergency/short term placement, or St George's House (or the 7-10-bed home if they are deemed high risk). During their first placement, we will work with the young person and, where possible, their family to agree the best pathway for them including whether they can return home or move into settled accommodation. The aim is for those entering the pathway to be placed in the type of accommodation

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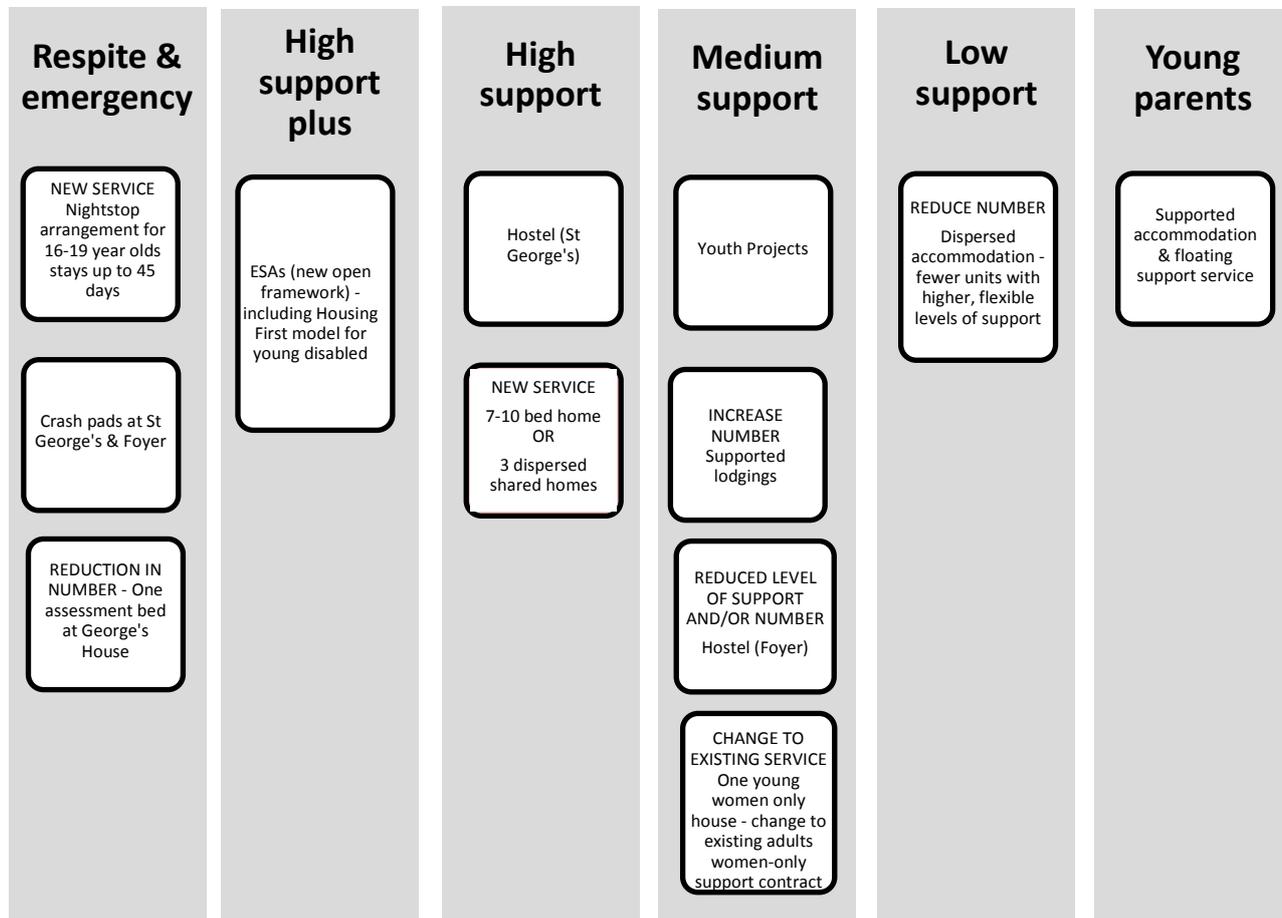
<sup>2</sup> An assessment under Part VII Housing Act 1996 of whether the council owes a duty to provide accommodation to the young person because they are homeless.

<sup>3</sup> An assessment of whether the young person is a child in need and, if so, whether the council has a duty to offer them accommodation as a child in care under s.20 Children Act 1989.

best suited to meet their needs and then progress through different support levels as appropriate to their needs. We expect that the usual length of stay in the pathway will be 12-18 months, with the average in high support accommodation being three months.

**Young people’s housing pathway – Recommended options for range of accommodation and support**

The diagram below sets out the supported accommodation we propose to commission, showing whether the proposed services are new, unchanged or will be subject to some other change.



We propose there are two ‘Key Pathways’ through the accommodation, with a different provider for each pathway. The aim of these pathways is to make it easier for each of the two providers to enable continuity of relationships between young people and their support workers, and to facilitate young people’s progression through the pathway and on to settled accommodation. It will be possible for young people to move across pathways, but normally they will move through one pathway with the same provider. Other provision will be outside of these pathways, i.e. emergency/short term accommodation, high support plus accommodation, the 10-bed high support home and young parents’ services. The two Key Pathways are:

	High support	Medium support	Low support
Key Pathway 1	NA	The Foyer	60-110 units of dispersed accommodation
Key Pathway 2	St George’s House	NA	60-110 units of dispersed accommodation

We intend to restrict access to young people’s services to 16-21 year olds plus 22-25 year olds who are particularly vulnerable.

## Stage 5 Settled accommodation

- **Move on plans** - All supported accommodation providers will have to review a young person's support plan before they move on to settled accommodation and identify what further support they need to sustain their new accommodation and participate in education, training and employment. The plan should identify what support will be available to the young person and what other help they might need. If the young person needs further support, the accommodation provider should provide this themselves or refer the young person to the Hub partner outreach service. The accommodation provider should also consider if they should make other referrals for the young person, for example to HYPE (helping young people into employment) or the CashPoint service provided by 1625 independent people.
- **Key pathway providers** – We will ask these providers what they will offer to help secure move on accommodation for young people in their pathway.
- **Monitoring long-term outcomes** - We will continue to monitor whether or not those who have left supported accommodation are homeless again within six months of moving on (by checking the Housing Support Register).
- **Surplus dispersed accommodation** – As we will be commissioning significantly fewer units of dispersed accommodation, there may be scope for using some of the surplus as move-on accommodation. We are interested to hear proposals as to how this could best be achieved.
- **Support to access private-rented accommodation** – We will ask a member of the council's private rented team to specialise in attracting private landlords who may be interested in renting to young people. This could include encouraging people to take lodgers in their homes.
- **Affordable accommodation linked to employment/training** – In other areas of the country there are schemes that have modified existing housing (e.g. sheltered housing for elderly, student nurses accommodation) to provide affordable housing linked to apprenticeships or other employment and training opportunities. We are interested in establishing a similar scheme in Bristol if suitable accommodation can be identified.