

Action to help prevent vulnerable young people from becoming homeless

- New guidance for councils to help care leavers live independently and prevent them becoming homeless
- Support for vulnerable young people announced during Care Leavers' Week

New guidance for councils to help ensure care leavers have the stable homes they need, and prevent them from becoming homeless has been published today (26 October 2020) by Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing Kelly Tolhurst.

Care leavers can often struggle to cope with the challenges of living independently at a young age without a family network, and they may need help to access services or deal with specific problems they face. Unfortunately for some this means they may end up at risk of being homeless.

To help ensure this vulnerable group get the support they need new guidance published today sets out how council housing departments and children's services can work effectively together to support care leavers into settled accommodation and prevent them from becoming homeless.

The [good practice guidance](#) recommends how council housing departments and children's services should produce a joint protocol that sets out how they will work together to ensure:

- each care leaver has a tailored support plan as they transition to independent living
- those at risk of homelessness are identified early and action is taken to prevent it
- a quick, safe and joined up response for care leavers who go on to become homeless

The government will write to councils to remind them that they can offer council tax discounts to care leavers. This is on top of £3.2 million government funding per year announced as part of the Rough Sleeping Strategy to increase the support provided to care leavers at risk of homelessness or rough sleeping. This funding has been allocated to the 47 councils with the highest number of care leavers at risk of rough sleeping.

Kelly Tolhurst, Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing said:

Young adults leaving care need firm foundations on which to build a stable home for themselves, and to help support them start their adult lives confidently so they can fulfil their potential.

The guidance I've published today will help key services ensure care leavers get the housing support they need is another mark of the government's resolute commitment of helping vulnerable people.

Children's Minister Vicky Ford said:

Young people leaving care too often face daunting transitions to adulthood, without the support system many of us take for granted. That's why this government is working together to tackle the challenges they have told us they face, like housing, health care and employment, to make sure the right help is available.

This new guidance will directly support care leavers to live independently and prevent them becoming homeless – building on the excellent work many councils are already doing for young people in care. Everyone has a responsibility – government, businesses, universities and local authorities alike – to support care leavers at this critical time in their life.

The good practice advice document published today has been produced by the Homelessness Advice and Support Team within the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), and with the Department for Education.

This government implemented the Homelessness Reduction Act, the most ambitious reform to homelessness legislation in decades, which placed new duties on local housing authorities to take reasonable steps to try to prevent and relieve a person's homelessness. This means that many more young people who may not previously have been eligible for support, are now being helped to prevent homelessness before it even occurs.

The Act also places a duty on public bodies, including Children's Services, Youth Offending Institutions and Youth Offending Teams ensuring better partnership working between public bodies and local authorities to prevent youth homelessness.

We have put in place bespoke support for local authorities through our Homelessness Advice and Support Team, which includes dedicated youth homelessness advisor roles that have a commitment to work with local authorities to proactively promote positive joint working across housing authorities and children's services, offering training, advice and support to all local authorities.

The Youth Advisers are working closely with local authorities on the particular challenges that young people and care leavers are facing during COVID-19.

The Department for Education has provided over £100 million to support children to learn at home, including providing laptops and tablets for care leavers.

It has also called on universities to extend the support they offer to care leavers as they progress into higher education.

All care leavers who go to university are entitled to a £2,000 bursary from

their local council, £1,200 from the college if they go into further education and £1,000 for the first year of an apprenticeship.

See the [Joint housing protocols for care leavers: good practice advice](#).

The government has launched 3 care leaver social impact bonds, which will use 'payment by results' contracts to support care leavers who are not in education, employment or training.

Further details on support for care leavers can be found in the announcements made on [24 April 2020](#) and [23 October 2019](#).