

Introduction

Leeds City Council provides a number of key housing services to people in housing need. This includes the provision and management of council housing through Strategic Landlord and the Leeds ALMOs, a range of housing options and initiatives designed to prevent homelessness through the Leeds Housing Options Service, and housing-related support services commissioned by Housing Strategy & Solutions that assist vulnerable people to achieve and maintain independent living. Ensuring that families in housing need are able to access housing services is a key priority for Leeds City Council. It is recognised that an affective way of meeting the needs of families is to provide services holistically as opposed to individual services working in isolation to meet their customer's needs. In order to meet the needs of families in a holistic way an affective working relationship needs to exist between Housing and Children's Services.

This protocol sets out how Housing and Children's Services can work in partnership to meet the housing needs of families by ensuring that a range of housing options are made available from any service a family accesses within Children's Services; a key principle of the protocol is that families should not have to present at the Leeds Housing Options Service or a local housing office to access the housing services they need. This will promote the accessibility of housing services and ensure that families receive the help they require before they face a crisis situation. It is envisaged that families will receive better housing outcomes through the protocol and that the health and wellbeing of vulnerable households will be promoted by ensuring that they receive the housing and support services they need. Fostering a positive relationship between Housing & Children's Services will be fundamental in achieving this.

Who is this protocol for?

This protocol is for use by named officers within Housing Services and Children's Services of Leeds City Council to establish roles and responsibilities for assisting families in housing need to access a range of housing options. The protocol has been designed to help families who may be at risk of homelessness, or in urgent need of housing advice/assistance, to resolve their housing difficulty by ensuring they have easy access to the services they need.

Roles and responsibilities

Children's Services will identify families accessing their service who are in need of housing assistance. For example this could be because they require housing support in their current property, are threatened with or have become homeless, or because they wish to be rehoused in alternative accommodation. Children's Services will refer cases to a named officer within Housing Strategy & Solutions using the referral form (Appendix 1) to provide necessary details of the household in need of assistance. Housing Strategy & Solutions will be required to notify the referrer that they have received the referral within one working day. The named officer will then make

further contact with the household within three working days of receiving the referral to establish the exact nature of their situation and to discuss appropriate housing options. The named officer will continue to monitor the case and provide assistance to the household until there is a resolution to their housing difficulty. The referrer will be kept informed of progress at each stage of the case. The outcome of case will be recorded by Housing Strategy & Solutions with the referrer being notified of the final outcome once the case has been closed.

Aims of the protocol

The aim of the protocol is to ensure that Children's Services has a named officer within Housing Strategy & Solutions that they are able to contact either to seek advice in relation to housing, or to refer specific cases where people are in need of housing assistance.

This protocol intends to embed the principles of Think Family practice whereby positive outcomes for families are achieved by co-ordinating the support they receive from different services, and in particular the 'no closed doors' philosophy whereby households are able to access services they need regardless of where they present within Leeds City Council.

The protocol will ensure that families have their housing needs identified when they first access a Leeds City Council service and that they are subsequently provided with appropriate housing options at that point rather than having to re-present at an alternative service within Leeds City Council.

This will be beneficial to both households who will find it easier to access housing assistance, and to Leeds City Council's Housing and Children's Services who will see improved outcomes for their customers, a reduction in the number of families who present in a crisis situation and a significant reduction in avoidable contact at their respective services.

Housing Interventions

A range of interventions will be available for households depending on their situation. These include homeless prevention initiatives, housing-related support services and housing management services as detailed below.

Housing Options

Households will be able to access a variety of housing options through the protocol. A **Personal Housing Plan** will be completed for each household referred by Children's Services which will capture the household's circumstances as well as suitable housing options available to them. Housing Strategy & Solutions will ensure that each household is registered for council housing on the Leeds Homes Register and that the appropriate priority award for rehousing has been made.

The **Mediation Service** which is provided by Foundation Housing aims to prevent homelessness caused by family relationship breakdown. The service aims to mediate between a young person and their family to resolve disputes with the aim of

the young person returning home indefinitely, or on a temporary basis until longer-term accommodation is secured. If it is inappropriate for the young person to return home the service will help them to secure alternative accommodation.

The **Sanctuary Scheme** aims to support households experiencing domestic violence or hate crime to remain in their existing home and prevent them from becoming homeless. The Scheme is provided by a range of partner agencies including West Yorkshire Police, Leeds City Council and CASAC. A range of security measures can be installed free of charge to a person's property to enable the household to remain living safely in their home without the need to move to alternative accommodation.

The **Private Lettings Scheme** provides a range of private rented properties suitable for families of different sizes. Every property let through the scheme is inspected to ensure it meets requisite standards and every landlord is accredited through the council. Households do not have to pay a bond/deposit to secure properties through the scheme as they are guaranteed by Leeds City Council. A range of different sized properties within different areas of the city are available to households through the scheme.

The **Homeless Prevention Fund** will be made available to families through the protocol. The fund can be used to make 'spend to save' investments that result in homeless prevention outcomes. For example, if a family is threatened with homelessness and has identified a private rented property that is affordable in rent, but that requires a bond payment that is unaffordable to them, then the fund can be used to cover the cost of the bond to facilitate a move to suitable accommodation. The rationale behind this is that the relatively modest cost incurred through paying a deposit to enable a household to secure suitable accommodation generates significant savings to the local authority in the long term; the cost of paying for a family's temporary accommodation, which is significant in comparison, is mitigated. The fund can also be used to provide furniture packs to families to facilitate a move to settled accommodation and to prevent the family from becoming homeless.

In instances where a family is already homeless, or where homelessness cannot be prevented, then **temporary accommodation** will be made available through the protocol. Leeds City Council is able to provide a range of temporary accommodation to meet every household's needs until they are rehoused in longer-term accommodation.

Housing-related support

The range of housing-related support services available to vulnerable people, including families, can be accessed through the protocol. Housing-related support services aim to assist vulnerable people to achieve and maintain independent living. There are two types of housing-related support service available to vulnerable people: accommodation based and floating support. The former provides accommodation to households with on-site or visiting housing support. Floating support services support households living in their own property, whether that is owner occupied, council, private rented or housing association, and will help them to

manage in their home and assist with rehousing if appropriate. Examples of the housing-related support services available to families are as follows:

Family Intervention Project works with families to assist them to secure and retain their accommodation, reduce anti social behaviour and prevent homelessness. The service works in conjunction with the Leeds ALMOs to offer families who have been evicted from their tenancies, on the grounds of anti social behaviour, the opportunity to be re-housed in a dispersed tenancy. This will be on condition that they sign up to a package of intensive support aimed at addressing their anti social behaviour, as well as its underlying causes. The service also supports families that are already in secure accommodation but where there is a risk of tenancy failure and loss of accommodation.

Foundation Housing's **TEAS & Resettlement Service** provides floating housing-related support to homeless families to help them make the transition from a period of homelessness to settled accommodation.

Connect Housing's floating support service for woman with children assists families to maintain their existing accommodation or to make a planned move to alternative accommodation. The service aims to work with families for up to two years until they have settled in suitable accommodation.

There are a range of accommodation based services for homeless families including **Connect Housing's Nowell Court, Carr Gomm's Richmond Court, Salvation Army's Mount Cross** and **Leeds Federated's LEAP** service which offer a mixture of hostel based and self contained dispersed accommodation to families in housing need.

Housing-related support services are also available specifically to women fleeing domestic violence (including women with children) such as **Leeds Women's Aid's Refuge** and **Leeds Housing Concern's Sahara** service which provide emergency accommodation to this client group. **Renew, Foundation Housing** and **Gipsil** all provide accommodation based or floating support services for teenage parents across the city.

Housing Management Services

Housing Strategy & Solutions will be able to support households threatened with homelessness because of rent arrears, anti-social behaviour or disrepair issues through the protocol. The named officer within Housing Services will be able to liaise with the Leeds ALMOs, Environment Health and the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit around any issues that threaten a household with homelessness.

For example if the household has fallen into rent arrears with Leeds City Council then it may be possible to negotiate a repayment plan with the Leeds ALMO on behalf of the household to ensure that they are able to continue to reside in the property. This could be arranged in conjunction with a package of housing-related support being provided to assist the household with managing their rent/bills in the future.

If a household is threatened with homelessness because they are experiencing anti-social behaviour, the Link Officer would liaise with the local housing office/Anti Social Behaviour Unit to ensure that an appropriate intervention takes place to prevent homelessness.

The protocol will also provide support to households who experience poor management practice from private sector landlords. For example, if there are issues of disrepair or if a household has been served an illegal eviction notice, the named officer will liaise with the landlord directly, as well as with Environment Health, to ensure that appropriate action is taken to prevent the household from becoming homeless.

Partner Agencies

The following key partners will be involved in the delivery of the protocol:

Leeds City Council Housing Services

Housing Strategy Officer
Housing Strategy & Solutions
5 West Merrion House
110 Merrion Centre
Leeds, LS2 8BB
Tel: 0113 247
Fax: 0113 247

Leeds City Council Children's Social Care Services

Head of Service – Fieldwork West /North West
7 West Merrion House
110 Merrion Centre
Leeds LS28BB
Tel : 0113 2477314
Fax :0113 247 6044

Information sharing between agencies

In order to facilitate access to mainstream housing, information will need to be exchanged to assess cases, provide suitable housing interventions and activate appropriate priority awards to reflect individual circumstances. Information will be shared appropriately when referring customers to partner agencies such as housing-related support services.

All information will be held in strict accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and other relevant information sharing legislation. Information will not be used for any purposes other than those explained to service users and will not be disclosed to any person who is not entitled to have such information or does not intend to use it in the best interests of the service user.

Where a referral is made to housing related support services the service user will be asked to give their written consent to the gathering of information from other sources which may be required to process the referral and for information to be shared. Summary of the roles and responsibilities of each party

LCC Housing Services	Children's Services
<p data-bbox="256 311 740 555">1. Referral received from Children's Services. Acknowledgement of receipt sent to referrer within one working day. Referral logged on monitoring spreadsheet.</p> <p data-bbox="256 573 740 817">2. Initial referral assessed to establish nature of the case. Checks made to see whether active housing application exists and whether appropriate priority award has been made.</p> <p data-bbox="256 835 740 1240">3. Contact made with customer within two working days to discuss situation and suitable housing options. PHP and LHM completed (and appropriate priority award made) with customer to capture their circumstances and appropriate interventions. Update recorded on Arc House Plus and fed back to referrer.</p> <p data-bbox="256 1258 740 1695">4. If customer is threatened with homelessness consider the following options:</p> <ul data-bbox="277 1384 719 1695" style="list-style-type: none"> •Mediation Service •Private Lettings Scheme •Sanctuary Scheme •Landlord negotiation •Prevention Fund •Liaison with ASBU/Environment Health •Refer to housing-related support service <p data-bbox="256 1713 740 1888">5. Outcomes recorded on Arc House Plus and monitoring spreadsheet. Referrer provided with details of case outcome.</p>	<p data-bbox="914 311 1398 555">1. Customers identified who are in housing need. Referral made to Housing Services. Customer notified of the referral process and to expect contact from Housing Services within three working days</p> <p data-bbox="914 835 1398 1079">3. Update on initial assessment provided by Housing Services. Customer's situation explained in detail including the suitable options available to resolve the customer's housing situation</p> <p data-bbox="914 1713 1398 1888">5. Outcome of customer's case received from Housing Services.</p>

Housing Options Protocol

Customer Name(s)

Address

Telephone Number

Date of Birth (s)

Family Composition

Name	Sex M/F	Relationship	D.O.B
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Overview of household's situation:

Officer referring (name, organisation and contact number) –

Further information *(any details of support needs, disability, communication needs, other agencies working with the household etc)*

Please return this form to:

Named Officer : @leeds.gov.ukT
Housing Strategy Officer Leeds City Council
5th Floor West
Merrion House
110 Merrion Centre LS2 8BB TEL 0113