

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD REPORT

17th September 2012

Title of paper:	Care Leavers Housing Protocol	
Director(s)/ Corporate Director(s):	Gill Moy, NCH	Wards affected: ALL
Contact Officer(s) and contact details:	Sharon Clarke, Service Manager, Children in Care Sharon.clarke@nottinghamcity.gov.uk Gill Moy, Director, Nottingham City Homes Gill.moy@nottinghamcityhomes.gov.uk	
Other officers who have provided input:	Lynn Pearce, Team Manager 15+ P Stanley Void Property Manager, Nottingham City Homes	
Relevant Council Plan Strategic Priority:		
World Class Nottingham		
Work in Nottingham		
Safer Nottingham		✓
Neighbourhood Nottingham		✓
Family Nottingham		✓
Healthy Nottingham		
Serving Nottingham Better		✓
Summary of issues (including benefits to customers/service users):		
Nottingham City Homes are committed to working with Children's Services to ensure Care Leavers are supported before and during their tenancy. It is anticipated that around sixty Care Leavers will be housed in NCH accommodation each year. It is envisaged that this protocol will enable us to work in a better partnership to improve outcomes for Care-leavers.		
Recommendation(s): Recommendations for 2012 below build on those proposed in 2011.		
1	That the Corporate Parenting Board approve and support the Care Leavers Housing Protocol which aims to ensure all Care-leavers accessing Nottingham City Homes are supported from registration to the maintenance of their properties in order to sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness.	
2	That the partnership between Nottingham Social Care services and Nottingham City Homes continues to develop in order to ensure Care-leavers receive appropriate, Safe and needs-led accommodation.	
3	That the protocol will enhance opportunities for Care-leavers to access Education and Employment.	



Care

Leavers Housing Protocol

Gill Moy, Head of Service, Nottingham City Homes
Sharon Clarke, Service Manager, Children in Care

Care Leavers Housing Protocol

1. Introduction

Nottingham City Homes are committed to working with Children's Services to ensure Care Leavers are supported before and during their tenancy. It is anticipated that around sixty Care Leavers will be housed in NCH accommodation each year.

Children's Services have met regularly with Nottingham City Homes and through these meetings the Care Leavers Protocol has been developed.

This protocol ensures all Care Leavers accessing NCH accommodation are supported from registration right through to maintaining their properties once allocated. NCH have supported Care Leavers financially by providing carpets and decoration of their properties where needed.

Children's Services and Nottingham City Homes will continue to meet as a group to raise any concerns as we monitor and evaluate the protocol and its procedures. Additional meetings have also taken place with other sections of NCH including the Home Link Support team to ensure we can provide a supportive and smooth transition for Care Leavers.

The 15+ Team are extremely pleased with NCH support and hope to continue this productive networking relationship, to maintain the high standard of support the protocol provides for Care Leavers accessing NCH properties.

This commitment is summarised in this protocol :

2. Registering – Homelink lead

When a Care Leaver reaches 16 years old, they should be registered onto the waiting list for housing. The application form and firm recommendation should identify the fact that the applicant is a Care Leaver. This allows plenty of opportunity for the Care Leaver to be offered advice and guidance in preparation of being offered a tenancy.

All applications from Care Leavers will have a specific 'flag' made on Northgate notepad. All details of the Personal Adviser should be recorded as well as other identified support needs. This 'flag' will follow the Care Leaver throughout their application stage and into their tenancy to ensure all aspects of NCH provide appropriate support.

3. Interview – Homelink lead

Once a firm recommendation has been received on behalf of a Care Leaver an interview is arranged by the Homelink Support Officer and this should also include the Personal Adviser. The purpose is to discuss and provide advice regarding areas of choice, type of accommodation that they would be eligible for and how to place bids and give a chance to discuss their concerns and ask

questions on a one-to-one basis. The interview will also focus upon the fact that an Introductory Tenancy will be given, the New Tenancy Visit, nine month review visit and the responsibilities within the tenancy agreement.

The Homelink Support Officer will be the single point of contact and will keep in regular contact with the Care Leaver.

A support needs assessment will also be required, during which any support needs that the applicant has will be identified.

This could include areas of sensitivity that need to be considered such as if the care leaver requires a male/female member of staff due to for example a history of abuse.

A flag will need to put onto the application stating any vulnerability issues or support needs that the Care Leaver has.

An ASB Risk Assessment will need to be conducted if necessary and the applicant must be informed of the Sensitive Lettings Policy. Again if there are any risks that the applicant poses this should also be flagged on the application.

4. Bidding – Homelink lead

The Homelink Support Officer will contact the Care Leaver and/or their Personal Adviser on a regular basis (at least monthly) to provide guidance on suitable properties that are advertised and becoming available in the chosen areas. The Homelink Support Officer will make the weekly property advert available to the Personal Adviser to enable them to provide support in placing bids. The Homelink Support Officer will monitor the application to ensure suitable bidding is taking place.

5. Offer Stage – Lettings Team lead

Once an offer has been made the Lettings Officer will liaise with the Care Leaver and their Personal Adviser to ensure that they are aware of the offer.

The Lettings Team will have a single named point of contact for each Care Leaver who will work closely with the Care Leaver and the Personal Adviser throughout the process.

The Lettings Officer should ensure that the Care Leaver is satisfied with the offer that has been made, that they are aware of the location of the property and that they have considered if they are able to access college, work, shops, transport, etc from the property. The Personal Adviser should also confirm the offer is suitable for the Care Leaver.

The Lettings Officer should also discuss support that is available to obtain furniture, training and employment opportunities accessible in this area,

advice on registering with doctors and dentists in the local area and other local services.

The Lettings Officer will discuss a referral to the Arches Project for items of furniture to supplement the Leaving Care Grant where necessary

6. Viewing – Lettings Team lead

An accompanied viewing will be carried out prior to sign up to enable further works to be identified that the applicant may need assistance with and to ensure that the applicant is happy with their offer.

The Care Leaver and their Personal Adviser should attend the viewing.

Decorating (where needed) and furniture requirements should be discussed with the applicant as to what they will require support with and what they are able to manage themselves.

Carpets may be provided for the Care Leavers in up to two rooms.

A discussion will also take place regarding whether the services of a Craft Worker are required for additional works.

7. Sign Up – Lettings Team lead

The Care Leaver and their Personal Adviser should attend the sign up

The Housing Patch Manager should where possible attend the sign up with the Care Leaver as this will give them the opportunity to explain their role and what assistance they are able to provide. They can also explain tenancy enforcement actions should the Care Leaver fail to comply with their tenancy agreement.

The Lettings Officer will assist the Care Leaver to set up their utilities accounts and also ensure that any further repairs are booked in.

The Lettings Officer will ensure a referral to the Arches Project is made for items of furniture to supplement the Leaving Care Grant where necessary

A Welcome Pack of useful items and an information pack of leaflets will be provided.

The Lettings Officer will make any necessary referrals for Floating Support.

8. Handovers – Lettings Team lead

Two weeks following the Sign Up the Lettings Officer will contact the Care Leaver ensuring that all repairs have been carried out, that they have received or in the process of obtaining furniture and there are no further issues. The

Lettings Officer will also ensure that their Personal Adviser has been in contact since the sign up appointment.

9. New Tenancy Visit – Housing Office lead

The Housing Patch Manager, will conduct a NTV to meet the Care Leaver and ensure that they have settled well into their new home and that all support is in place. This visit should take place within the first six weeks of the tenancy, however can be brought forward. Again the HPM will be able to signpost to services and offer guidance and support to the new tenant. If necessary the HPM can liaise with the Personal Adviser and/or Support Worker.

The HPM should raise awareness of their role and the support that they can give. They should also make the tenant aware of action they can take against the tenant should they fail to adhere to their tenancy agreement.

10. HPM ongoing Role – Housing Office lead

The HPM will regularly meet with the tenant at appropriate intervals – initially this will be every month and can be reduced with the agreement of the Care Leaver and/or the Personal Adviser and/ or Support Worker.

The HPM should ensure that the notepad is regularly updated following visits with the Care Leaver.

The HPM will maintain regular contact with the Care Leaver and if unable to do so liaise with the Personal Adviser from the 15+ team if there are any issues or cause for concern

The HPM will provide a signposting service should the Care Leaver require support on any other issues drug/alcohol, sexuality, training and education, healthcare, childcare etc

The HPM will make any necessary referrals for Floating Support if further support needs are identified.

The Tenancy and Estate Manager should discuss any Care Leavers with HPMs during their one to ones to agree any actions required or provide necessary guidance.

Prior to any enforcement action being taken a meeting should be arranged with the Care Leaver and their Personal Adviser and/or Support Worker.

11. Rents ongoing role – Rents lead

The Financial Inclusion Officer will work with the Care Leaver from the outset of their tenancy and provide support and assistance.

The rent account of the Care Leaver should be reviewed on a weekly basis by the Rent Account Manager. Prior to any enforcement action being taken a

meeting should be arranged with the Care Leaver and their Personal Adviser and/or Support Worker.

The FIO will make any necessary referrals for Floating Support if further support needs are identified.

12. Void Property Standard – Property Services lead

The standard of void properties will be enhanced for Care Leavers. This may include provision of carpets in up to two rooms and the services of a Craft Worker where additional works are required. Where a Surveyor has noted the need for decoration of the property this will be undertaken or an additional decorating allowance can be provided.

13. Worklessness and training opportunities – Learning & Development lead

NCH are committed to working with Care Leavers to provide opportunities. This includes the RISE programme with funding secured for two Care leavers to work with the Estates and Caretaking Services team for a six month placement. NCH has a Tackling Workless Strategy with Care Leavers a key group to target.

14. Links with Independent Living – Independent Living Housing lead

Opportunities for Care Leavers to work with tenants of Independent Living complexes will be explored. This may include skills exchanges and other ways to promote community cohesion. Risk Assessments may need to be carried out in view of the potential vulnerability of both groups.

15. Review and evaluation – Lettings Team lead

Monthly meetings will take place to discuss progress made, achievements and areas of concern. The meetings will track Care Leavers and ensure that support is provided to assist with tenancies being sustained. Statistics such as length of tenancy, legal action taken and rent arrears will be analysed to evaluate the effectiveness of the protocol. An annual review of the protocol will take place with any necessary amendments being undertaken.

P Stanley
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5 July 2012 ¹