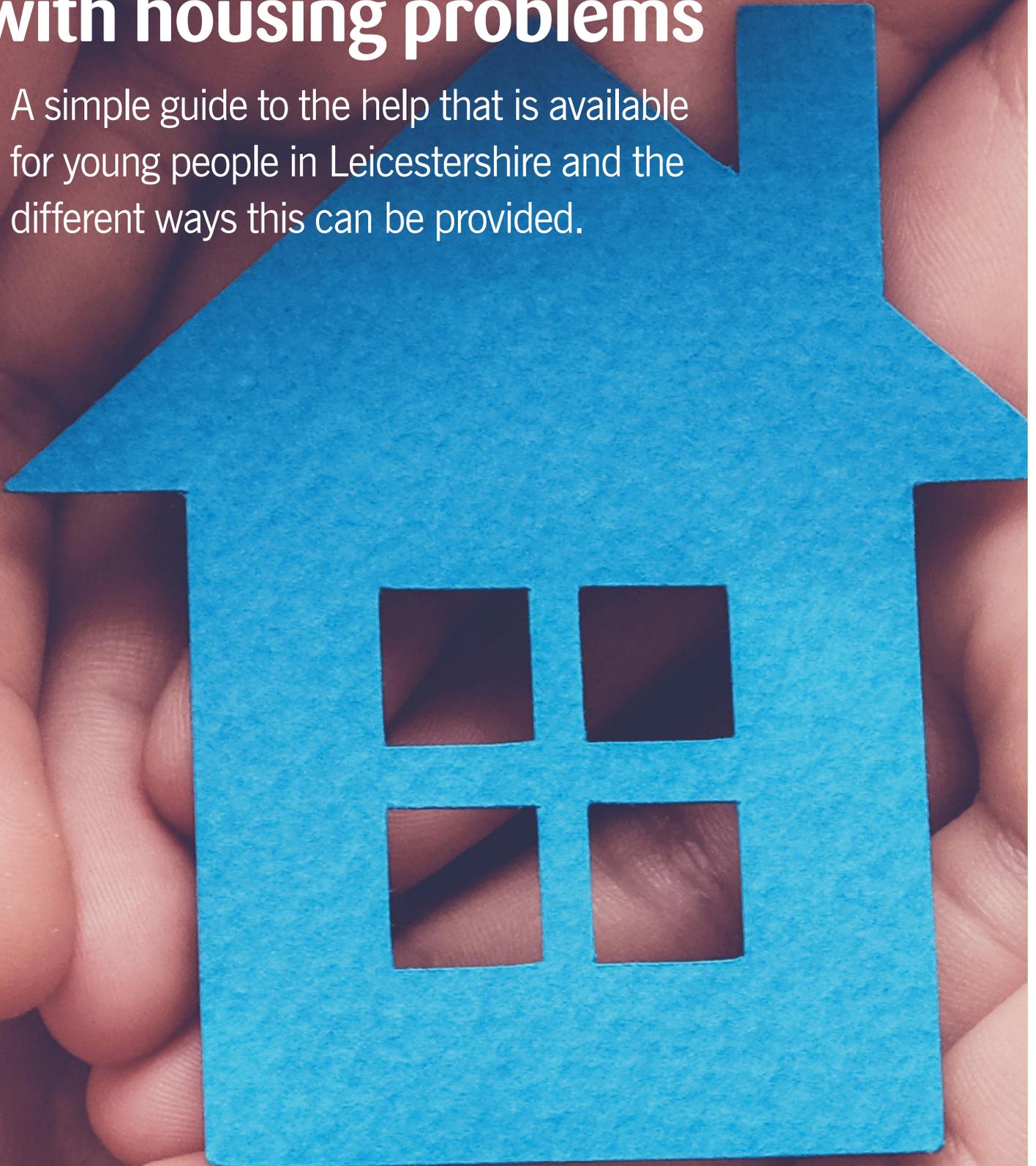


Helping young people with housing problems

A simple guide to the help that is available for young people in Leicestershire and the different ways this can be provided.



What will happen if I have nowhere to live?

There are lots of different reasons why you might have housing problems when you are 16 and 17 years old. You might have fallen out with your family, struggled to manage in independent accommodation or friends might have got fed up of letting you sleep on their sofa.

You might have other problems that make it hard to settle down and live with your family. This might include using drugs and alcohol or getting into trouble with the police. You might be feeling very anxious or worried about things happening at home or at school. Things might be happening at home or in your friendship group that make you feel unsafe.

Whatever the reason; there is help available for you across Leicestershire so that you can find somewhere safe to live and start to make positive steps to get things on track.

You might just need somewhere to stay for one night so that someone can help talk to your family or you might need a range of help to support you to make the move into adult life.

This support might include finding somewhere that you can call your home and developing all the skills to live independently - like getting onto a training course, finding an apprenticeship or job and managing your finances.

At Leicestershire County Council we promise that when you are having problems with housing we will:

Work with you to understand what help you need

Help you to strengthen or rebuild your relationship with your parent(s) and wider family

Support you to find a place you can call home if this is needed

Respect your choices

Listen to your views

Help you gain the skills you will need to be a happy and successful adult

What should I do if I have nowhere to stay now or very soon?

First, you need to tell someone that you are having housing problems and ask for help.

Who can I tell?

If you are in college you can tell your tutor or go to the student advice services.

If you live close to a council office, you can go to the housing department of your district council or a county council children social care office and ask for help with accommodation.

If you have a teacher, youth worker, a social worker or Youth Offending Officer or any professional that is helping you with something; you can ask them to contact the number at the back of this leaflet.

You can ring County Council Children Services, First Response team to talk about your problems with a social worker on the number at the back of this leaflet



What will happen if I ask for help?

Someone will ask you:

- What has happened to cause your housing problems
- Why you can't live at home any more
- Where you have been staying
- Who has been looking after you recently

If there is something that can be done to help you go home or to live with someone in your family then someone from the housing team or the children social work team will help to make this happen. This will mean someone will try to speak to your family to find out what they think and work with you to make a plan that will help you stay at home.

It will be important for you to tell us about any worries that you have about life at home. The aim will be to see what everyone can do to help to sort out these worries so that you can live with your family.

BUT

You will not be made to go home to your family if it is not safe for you to be there - so don't worry about that.

AND

Your views about what is happening will be carefully considered from the first contact you have with everyone who is helping you.



Getting home

If it seems that things can be sorted out quickly, a plan will be made to help you go home and then more time will usually be spent looking into how everyone can help to stop problems happening again. You might have a worker from Children's Services – working alongside you and your family to make sure you are all getting on.

Somewhere safe to stay

If there are problems at home that aren't easy to sort out quickly you may need somewhere safe to stay until things are sorted. If this is clear from the first contact you make, a place will be found for you to stay as soon as possible.

We will always ensure:

- The place you are offered is safe.
- The place you are offered will have the support that you need.
- The place you are offered is local to Leicestershire and usually somewhere you know and feel safe.
- You have a plan that you can understand and a clear timescale for what is going to happen.

What happens next?

Once you have somewhere to stay – either with your wider family/relatives or in a place we have found for you to stay an assessment will be completed.

Assessments

What is an assessment?

An assessment is just a way to try to **understand** what is happening and what **help** you need so that a **plan** can be made. The plan aims to make a positive difference for you so that your problems can be sorted out.

Doing an assessment just means **talking** about your life - telling someone what has happened in the past to cause problems for you now and understanding what you think will help. It means **asking** the people who know you what they think might help and what they can do in the future to offer you support.

An assessment is usually led by a social worker but may include other people that can help such as housing workers, youth workers, teachers, health workers and people from your family.

All the people involved in the assessment will need to **listen** to your point of view and keep you **involved** from the start.

We will help you to say what you want to say.

Provides lots of opportunities

- like support with education, accommodation and finances - you get support to get into work

What our young people in care are saying...

It's not that bad and different to the stereotype

What happens...a bit more detail?

The social worker will meet you and talk about what has happened and what you want for your future. It could include talking about family life, education or training that you are interested in, ask about how you could cope cooking and looking after your own home and what help you will need to make this as easy as possible.

How long will it take?

An assessment won't take forever to complete - it could be finished within 10 days or sooner - it should never take longer than 45 days.

What happens when the assessment is finished?

The finished assessment will be written down and shared with you and you will be asked what you think about it.

What happens after the assessment?

The assessment will need to answer some important questions:

- Are you 16 or 17? **This means that technically you are a child.**
- What sort of housing problems do you have now, and can we find a safe way for you to go home or to stay within your family network. **We are trying to find out if you are Homeless?**
- Is housing the only problem that you have or will it be hard for you to live on your own without adults around you to care for you - that means you are called a **CHILD in NEED** of support.



1. Help to stay at home

If the assessment finds that you are not homeless – that we have managed to help sort out things for you to stay at home, the assessment might suggest a plan is made to help you to live at home and to avoid problems for you in the future.

It might mean you attending a meeting with your family and other people to make sure everyone knows what help you need.

A social worker might have to stay involved to make sure everyone does what is agreed in the plan and that this is completed as soon as possible.

If you are staying at home the plan should be checked and consider if it is still needed after 3 months and then again after 6 months. We hope that for most young people the plan has been completed within 6 months and you will just carry on with your family's help.

What is this called - this is a Child in Need plan and is led by a social worker

If you stay at home but the problems that made your housing problems have been sorted out during the assessment the plan might be for some help to be given – but without the help of a social worker. You and your family might be offered some groups to attend or youth workers to help.

What is this called - This is called an Early Help plan

The assessment might state that no plan is required – things are sorted so you and your family can get back to family life without any extra help or a plan and no follow up with any professional extra to those already involved.

No Further Action is required

2. Living away from home - you need simple housing help

The assessment might conclude that you simply need help to find somewhere to live. You might have all the skills you need to manage living away from home – have a job or be accessing training and still have good support from your family even though you can't live with them.

If you don't need a lot of help - and there is confidence that all you need is somewhere to live the social worker will contact the housing department and share the assessment with them. The housing department will try to assist you to find somewhere to live. Although you will have this help you will be responsible for paying for the accommodation and will need to claim the benefits that you are entitled to.

The assessment will have concluded that you do not need the type of help that a social worker needs to provide - you are not a Child in Need of support.

You should know that very few young people who are homeless aged 16/17 are likely to have simple housing needs. That's because it is hard to live independently without lots of help.



You get support
and people
are friendly

What our young people
in care are saying...



You don't
get judged

3. Living away from home - housing needs and other support - Being a 'child in need'

If you are homeless and the assessment finds that you need more than simple housing help you will be classed as a Child in Need. This means that the Council has a duty to look after you and to help you stay safe/have a place to live and to have the chance to become an adult with as much help as possible.

We can do this by making you a 'Looked After' young person. This will mean the Council has to behave like a parent - making sure you have everything you need. This will mean:

- We want you to have a social worker who will make sure the plan is right for you and will work with you and other people to get the help you need.
- You will have meetings sometimes to check the plan is working so that it is up to date and you have everything that you need.
- The social worker will lead the search to find you somewhere to live that is your home – that is in a place you know and offers all the help you need to go to college/get a job or finish your education.
- Children's Services will pay for the cost of your housing and education and make sure you have enough money to live independently.
- The social worker will continue to try to help you repair relationships with your family.

We would recommend that a young person who is 16/17 and homeless accepts our support and becomes Looked After so that we can help you get the best help you need.

Some questions about being 'Looked After'

I don't want a social worker - they will just interfere.

The social worker might not be the main person who you see - even if you are Looked After. The place you live will have a key worker who will work with you closely and get to know you well. The social worker will want to listen to you and get things right for you but won't be making decisions about you without you being involved. A social worker can really help get problems sorted and find the sort of help that you will need.

I want to live in my own place not in a children's home or foster family

There is no way for a young person under 18 to have a tenancy from the housing department straight away. It's hard to pay for somewhere to live and manage all the responsibilities of running a home. If you find a private rented place this might need a big deposit and it might be hard to get financial support or it just won't be enough to cover the cost of rent and running a home. A landlord is unlikely to accept someone who is under 18 without someone agreeing to guarantee to pay the rent.

Instead the sort of places that most young people who are 16+ live are not children's homes but are places where you have your own space but, some parts are shared with other young people. There will be rules to follow and there will be staff around who will offer support and guidance that is designed to help you move to your own place in the future.

The type of place we find you to live will be carefully matched - to consider what you need/your views/the location/any education or training that you are attending - your ideas will always be carefully considered.

We will only offer a more structured home environment or foster placement if we are worried that you might be unsafe in a 16+ placement and this will only be for as long as the risk remains high. The assessment will always write down the type of support you need, and you can ask the social worker to explain why some accommodation is safer for you.

I don't like meetings and will find it hard to follow rules

You will have help to speak out and your views will always be taken seriously. There will be ways to get your voice heard even if you don't want to go to a meeting. The priority will be to ensure you listen and tell us what you need. You might have a children's rights worker who will help you make your point - that is their job and they are very experienced at getting your voice heard. Anywhere you live there will be rules to follow - the staff will be there to help you understand why the rules are important and keeping you safe will be key to these rules.



You can still be friends with your family

What our young people in care are saying...



You get skills for the future

What sort of help might I get if I am Looked After?

- If you are Looked After you will always have a social worker - even if they are not the main professional who you see day to day.
- You will have a plan - setting out clearly what people need to do to help you.
- You will have regular meetings to check progress and make sure things are working for you.
- You will get financial help and the cost of your accommodation/ training/and living costs paid for by the Council.
- You will have someone to help you gain skills to live independently - like getting back to education and training/finding permanent home post-18 and someone who will listen to your worries/you will be supported to register with a GP and dentist and stay healthy.
- If you remain Looked After for more than 13 weeks you will get help after you stop being Looked After. This means that Childrens Services will still be responsible for your support. This is an important safety net as you get older.
- If you were Looked After for less than 13 weeks you will still get advice and assistance from Children's Services - this is important if you need a bit of help in the future.

How long will I need to be Looked After?

We would like you to stay Looked After until you are ready to reduce the help you need. This will be different for different young people

We will ask you at key meetings what your views are about the way we are helping, and this will include if we should consider ending the Looked After status. There is no fixed timescale, but you will not remain Looked After once you are 18 - but might continue to have some help from Children's Social Care up to your 25th birthday.



Can I decide I don't want to be Looked After and still get the help I need?

If after listening to all the benefits of being Looked After you decide not to accept this, you can still get help with housing needs. The main difference is:

- The cost of your accommodation will your responsibility and you will need to claim benefits to get the money you need.
- You will still be found accommodation - but there may be less choice and if you turn it down the Housing Department can stop looking for places for you to stay.
- You will still not be able to have your own place to live, anywhere that you are offered might have less support but will still have rules to follow.
- You should still have a plan to set out the type of help you need, and this might continue to be led by a social worker. You will need to agree to this support.
- You won't be entitled to the longer lasting help as you become a young adult, and this can mean you have less choice and options when you become 18.

Having your say

The Council wants to make sure you stay safe and wants to work with you to sort out your housing problems.

We don't want to force you to do something that you don't want to do **BUT:**

- Think carefully about your options if you are homeless now.
- It is hard to live independently, and you will always need help to get things sorted - at least in the beginning.
- The more help you have the safer you will be and being Looked After can be the way to get the best practical, financial and emotional support to help you deal with all the complex problems there may be when you are homeless.

We will always prioritise keeping you safe - so if you are making choices that place you at risk we will continue trying to work with you to keep you safe.

What happens if I really don't want to be looked after?

If you decide not to accept becoming Looked After even having thought about all of the benefits; you will be asked to sign the statement at the end of this leaflet, so we know that you have had the best advice.

You will be encouraged to talk to someone independent who can explain things again - either someone you know or by ringing one of the numbers at the end of the leaflet. The social worker who worked with you to complete the assessment can put you in touch with someone to give you this independent advice.

If you continue to tell us that you don't want to be Looked After, but you do want support, we will arrange a meeting with you and other people who can help to agree the plan that you need to get the support you need.

Important contact information

Help for young people who have housing problems

Local

- **Blaby District Council
Housing Options Team**
0116 272 7770
www.blaby.gov.uk/housing
- **Charnwood Borough Council
Housing Options Team**
01509 634567
- **Harborough District Council
Housing Options Team**
01858 828282
- **Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council
Housing Options Team**
01455 238141
- **Melton Borough Council
Housing Options Team**
0116 450 2502
- **North West Leicestershire District Council
Housing Choices Team**
0800 952 0079
www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/housing_advice
- **Oadby & Wigston Borough Council
Housing Options Team**
0116 288 8961
- **Citizens Advice Bureau Leicestershire**
0300 330 1025
www.citizensadviceleicestershire.org
- **First Contact Plus**
0116 305 4286
www.firstcontactplus.org.uk/our-services/your-home/housing-options
- **First Response Central Duty**
(social work duty service 24 hours)
0116 305 0005
- **The Bridge**
01509 260500
www.thebridge-eastmidlands.org.uk

National

- **Centrepoint**
0808 800 0661
<https://centrepoint.org.uk/youth-homelessness/get-help-now>
- **Shelter**
0808 800 444
<https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing>
- **Childline**
0800 1111

Appendix 1

Confirmation of Housing Advice

- I can confirm that I have been given a copy of Leicestershire county council leaflet 'Helping young people with housing problems aged 16 and 17'.
- I have had help to read the leaflet and have decided that I do not want to become 'Looked after' - even though this may mean that I can't access the best support for my housing problems.
- I have been given help to speak to someone who is independent and still don't want to become looked after.
- I understand that a copy of my assessment will now be shared with the housing department and they will try to help me to find housing.
- I understand that I will be responsible for paying for my accommodation and will need to claim benefits that I am entitled to.
- I know that if I don't accept the accommodation that I am offered or break the rules this will affect my housing options.

Name of young person

Signed

Date

Name of social worker

Signed

Date

Appendix 2

Young Person's feedback form

We are interested in hearing about your contact with Children's social care about your housing problems.

Please help us by answering the following questions.

1. On a scale of 1-10 when 10 means you felt fully listened to and involved and 0 being not listened to or involved at all. How would you rate the way your social worker listened to you and involved you in the process of understanding your housing problems?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. On a scale of 1-10 when 10 means you had the type of help that you needed to sort out your housing problems and 0 being you had no help at all - How would you rate the help that your social worker provided to you?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. On a scale of 1 to 10 when 10 means you have been told about all the different types of help that you can have and 0 means you had no information at all about housing help how would you rate the information and advice that you have been given about housing support

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Any comments?

