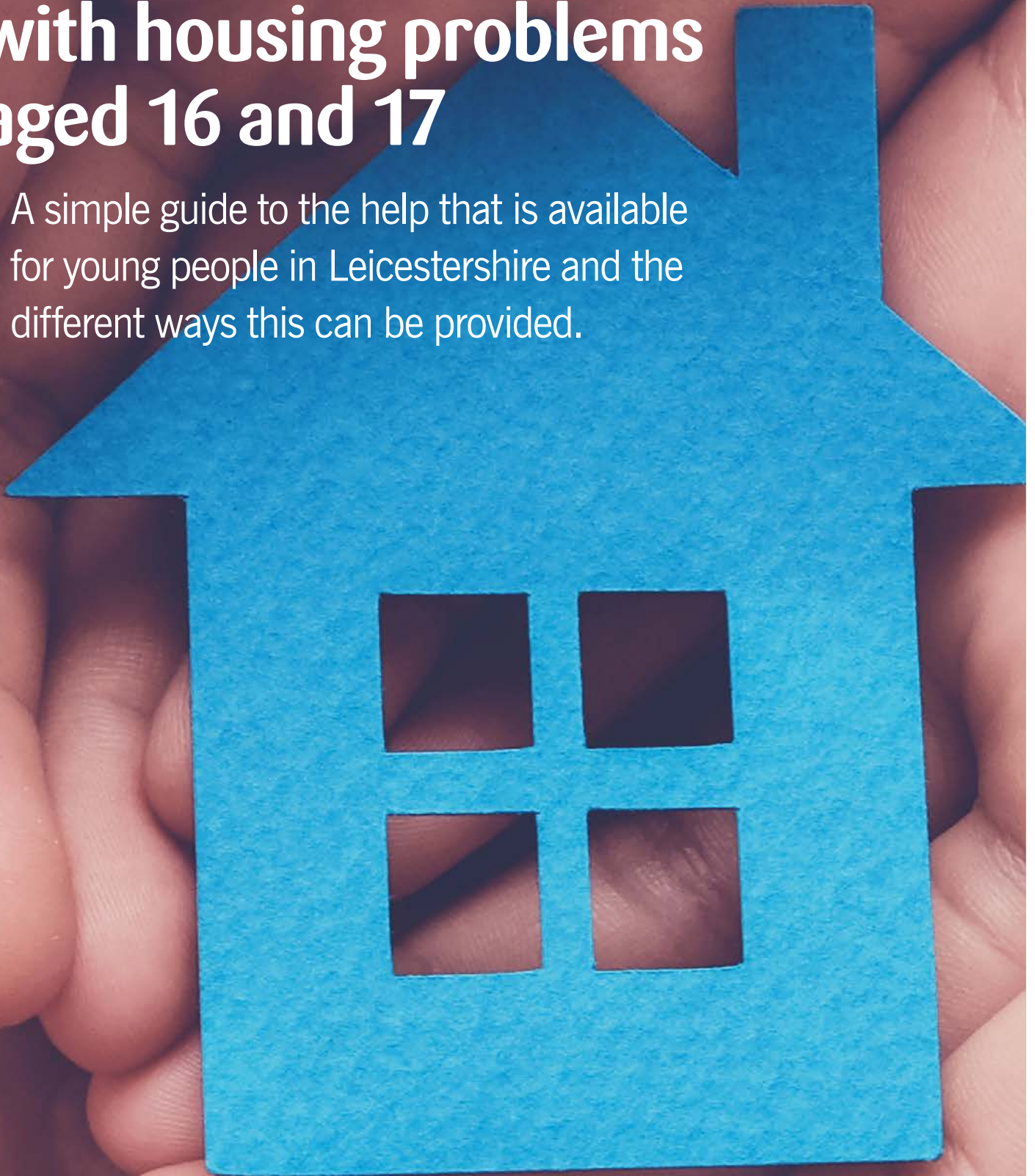


# Helping young people with housing problems aged 16 and 17

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



Helping young people make positive choices about the help that they receive when they have housing problems.

A guide to being supported by Leicestershire County Council when you have housing problems.

## 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. Please remember sofa surfing with your friends is still classed as homelessness, as you have no secure place to stay.

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

Listen to your views

Respect your choices

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

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



# What should you do if you 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 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 you 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 youth workers, teachers, health workers and people from your family. We would want to include housing teams in this assessment as they also have a legal duty to you if you are homeless. Working together will make sure that we get things right for you. This means making a homeless application to housing as well as finding out what support you can receive from social workers.

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.

We can also put you in touch with an independent person who can advocate what you want to happen as part of this assessment. You might not think you need this extra help but having someone independent to give you advice is something that we think would be a good thing for you to have.

### Provides lots of opportunities

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

What do young people in our Care say about being Looked after?

### It's not that bad and different to the stereotype

it's definitely not like Tracy Beaker!



### 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 – exploring your options

If you have presented as homeless and you have been unable to source accommodation within your network and have nowhere to stay, we will ensure that you are provided with accommodation under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 whilst your needs, including those for continued accommodation and support are further assessed. If you are accommodated for a continuous period of more than 24 hours, you will formally become a young person looked after by the Local Authority until the assessment is completed and this will conclude with a decision about whether you remain a young person who is 'looked after' by the Local Authority or a 'Child in Need'.

During the assessment period, we will ensure that you receive accurate information in order to be able to make an informed decision about your housing situation. You will be signposted to advocacy services to support this. Your Social Worker will work together with the relevant Housing Authority and your Social Worker and Housing Officer will complete a joint assessment. They will discuss with you what assistance may be available to you under their homeless prevention or relief duties and what duties will be owed if you do not become looked after, including that which falls within Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.



You get support  
and people  
are friendly

What do young people  
in our Care say about  
being Looked after?



You don't  
get judged

The assessment might conclude that you only require help in respect of your housing needs. You might have been assessed as having the skills you need to manage independently living away from home – have a job or be accessing training and still have a good support from your family even though you can't live with them. If this is the case then the housing department will take responsibility for the type of accommodation you need and you will pay for this using benefits.

You should know that very few young people who are homeless aged 16/17 are likely to have only housing that they can manage without the support of a Social Worker. If this is the outcome of the assessment – **you are not a Child in Need of Support**.

### 3. Living away from home – housing needs and other support – Being a Child in Need or 'Looked After' young person

If you are homeless and you have explored your options (as outlined in section 2) and the assessment concludes that you require support from a Social Worker; you will be classed as a **Child in Need**. This means that the Local Authority has a duty to support you and help you stay safe/have a place to live and to have a chance to become an adult with as much help as possible. Your Social Worker will work together with your Housing Officer to advise of the assessment outcome. You will need to access benefits to support you covering the cost of your accommodation.

It could conclude that you are a **'Looked After'** young person and this decision will have been made, taking your views fully into consideration after you have been provided with advice and information from your Social Worker and Housing Officer. This will mean the Local Authority will behave like a parent – making sure that you have everything that you need. They will owe you the duties that are afforded to all looked after children. If you cease to be looked after, you will be owed the duties as a Care Leaver (if accommodated for a period of 13 weeks after your 14th birthday and some of that being on or after your 16th birthday).

Whilst accommodated under s20 of the Children Act 1989, you will not be eligible for welfare benefits, including housing benefits or housing costs under Universal Credit. The Local Authority will have a duty to maintain them, including meeting the cost of your accommodation.

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 you will work with 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 16/17 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.


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 do young people in our Care say about being Looked after?

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 Children's 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.
- If you are eligible for a Care Leaver service you will be allocated a Personal Advisor who will firstly build a relationship with you, understand your needs, and support your social worker and you to work through your Pathway plan. Their main role will be to support you with independence and make the necessary referrals and applications. They will support you to remain in Housing, Education, Employment and Training up to the age of 25. You will be entitled to Universal Credit and Housing Benefit and have Council Tax exemption. Your Personal Advisor will be able to assist and support in applying for other financial assistance.

## 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 advice and assistance from Children's Social Care up to your 25th birthday.

**It's normal -  
don't worry  
even if there  
are ups and  
downs**

**What do young people  
in our Care say about  
being Looked after?**

**You get  
a place  
to live**

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

You need to be aware of the duties placed upon housing services to undertake an assessment and develop a personalised housing plan; taking steps to help you retain or secure accommodation (sections 195 and section 189b of the Housing Act 1996). Equally, you need to understand the requirement for you to co-operate and complete actions identified in your personalised plan (section 193b and 193c of the Housing Act 1996). The Housing Officer will explain the 'accommodation offer' under what is known as a 'relief duty'. This is suitable accommodation which has reasonable prospect of being available for occupation for at least 6 months (sections 189b and 195 of the Housing Act 1996).

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 social worker can still help you alongside housing officers, so you can still access lots of support from both agencies. The main difference is:

- The cost of your accommodation will be the responsibility of the housing department 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.
- You will still not be able to have your own place to live and the place that you are offered will still have support, rules and staff available to help you.
- 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
- You can also change your mind at any point about wanting to become a looked after child. If you feel that this would be better for you. You can change your mind up until your 18th Birthday. So expect us to check in with you to confirm that you haven't changed your mind.

## 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

## North-West Leicestershire

- **North-West Leicestershire District Council Housing**  
[www.nwleics.gov.uk/contacts/housing](http://www.nwleics.gov.uk/contacts/housing)  
01530 454545
- **Housing Choices Team**  
[www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/housing\\_advice](http://www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/housing_advice)  
0800 952 0079

## Charnwood

- **Housing Options Team**  
[www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/homeless\\_or\\_at\\_risk\\_of\\_being\\_homeless](http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/homeless_or_at_risk_of_being_homeless)  
01509 634 567
- **Single Access Point**  
[www.thebridge-eastmidlands.org.uk/services/single-access-point](http://www.thebridge-eastmidlands.org.uk/services/single-access-point)  
01509 260 500 / 0800 038 5964
- **Charnwood Citizens Advice Team**  
[www.charnwoodcab.org.uk](http://www.charnwoodcab.org.uk)  
01509 649 605

## Blaby

- **Blaby District Council Housing**  
[www.blaby.gov.uk/housing](http://www.blaby.gov.uk/housing)  
0116 275 0555

## Oadby and Wigston

- **Housing Options Team**  
[www.oadby-wigston.gov.uk/pages/housing\\_and\\_homelessness\\_advice](http://www.oadby-wigston.gov.uk/pages/housing_and_homelessness_advice)  
0116 288 8961

## Market Harborough

- **Housing Team**  
[www.harborough.gov.uk/info/20017/housing/289/homelessness](http://www.harborough.gov.uk/info/20017/housing/289/homelessness)  
01858 828282

## Melton Mowbray

- **Housing Options Team**  
[www.melton.gov.uk/housing/housing-and-homelessness-advice/homeless-or-at-risk](http://www.melton.gov.uk/housing/housing-and-homelessness-advice/homeless-or-at-risk)  
01664 502502

## Hinckley and Bosworth

- **Homeless Assistance Team**  
[www.hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk/info/200117/homelessness](http://www.hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk/info/200117/homelessness)  
01455 238141

## Leicestershire – all districts

- **First Response Children's Duty (social work duty service 24 hours)**  
0116 305 0005
- **The Bridge**  
[www.thebridge-eastmidlands.org.uk](http://www.thebridge-eastmidlands.org.uk)  
01509 260 500 / 0800 038 5964
- **First contact plus**  
[www.firstcontactplus.org.uk/our-services/your-home/housing-options](http://www.firstcontactplus.org.uk/our-services/your-home/housing-options)  
0116 305 4286
- **Talk2Sort**  
[www.thebridge-eastmidlands.org.uk/services/single-access-point](http://www.thebridge-eastmidlands.org.uk/services/single-access-point)  
01509 260 500 / 0800 038 5964
- **Yes project**  
[www.thebridge-eastmidlands.org.uk/services/yes-project](http://www.thebridge-eastmidlands.org.uk/services/yes-project)  
01509 260 500 / 0800 038 5964
- **Citizens Advice Bureau Leicestershire**  
[www.citizensadviceleicestershire.org](http://www.citizensadviceleicestershire.org)  
0808 2787854

## National

- **Centrepoin**  
<https://centrepoin.org.uk/>  
0800 587 5158
- **Shelter**  
[https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing\\_advice/homelessness/help\\_if\\_youre\\_homeless\\_16\\_and\\_17\\_year\\_olds](https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/homelessness/help_if_youre_homeless_16_and_17_year_olds)  
0808 800 444
- **Childline**  
[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)  
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 offered 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 become responsible for funding my housing using housing benefit.

Name of young person .....

Signed .....

Date .....

Name of social worker .....

Signed .....

Date .....

More details about how and why we use information at Leicestershire County Council can be found at:

[www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2018/10/17/childrens-social-care-fair-processing-notice.pdf](http://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2018/10/17/childrens-social-care-fair-processing-notice.pdf)



# 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 an 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 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?**

