



**STOCKPORT**  
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL



# **‘STARTER’ FLAT**

## **Operating Procedures**

## **OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR 'STARTER' FLAT (FOR YP AGED 16-21 YEARS)**

### **1. VISION**

*'To provide a 'taste' of independent living for young people aged 16-21 years within a supported environment and as part of their pathway planning before making that further step into their own tenancy and independent living. The 'Starter' flat will be a resource for young people, their carers and staff to access to practice independence and practical life skills to prepare young people for transition to adulthood underpinned by the Get Ready for Adult Life toolkit.'*

### **2. BACKGROUND**

Traditionally LAC aged 16/17yrs 'move on' from their placements into semi-independent accommodation and at 18 years into their own tenancy. Research and local information shows that too few young people are prepared for the experience of living alone and taking the responsibilities that come with managing a tenancy i.e. managing finances and paying bills, menu planning/meal preparations, reporting and organising repairs, managing relationships with peers and living alone/loneliness. Local information tells us some young people struggle living independently and managing finances, too quickly build up arrears and face warnings for eviction.

The national average age of young people leaving families is 28 years, a difference of 10 years compared with our vulnerable young people. We are committed to widening our accommodation sufficiency so care leavers remain in supported accommodation post 18 yrs up to 20/21 yrs before moving into their own tenancy so they maximise support. Delaying young people moving into their own tenancy is also supported by the recent government announcement for a LAC 'staying put' with Foster Carers up to the age of 21 years.

The strategy for care leavers to be able to remain in supported accommodation /placements up to age 20/21 yrs reinforces the need for a 'taster' flat for 16-21 yrs young people so they can 'test out' independent living in a support environment before making that further step into their own tenancy and independent living.

### **3. THE PROVISION**

The 'Starter' flat is fully furnished and located xxxxxxxx.

The 'Starter' flat would be used for LAC/ Care leavers aged 16-21 years following social work assessment and be part of pathway planning. LAC/ care leavers will be able to get a 'taste of living alone' as part of pathway planning to prepare young people for transition to independent living. Requests can be made for stays of 3 months up to 6 months. This will be the young person's main placement but they will not hold the lease. The lease will be held by Children's Social Care in partnership with Stockport Homes

Whilst at the 'Starter' flat the young person would be supported by Starters floating support in addition to their parent/carer. The social worker/ personal advisor will meet with young person at least 1 x per week to offer advice/guidance to planning the stay i.e. budgeting, menu planning, local facilities and amenities, emergency contacts.

Should the young person not be receiving benefits (18+) maintenance payment (16/17) then a financial pathway plan would be required for the duration of the stay.

### **4. THE REFERRAL AND SUPPORT PROCESS**

#### **4.1 Administration of Request for stay**

The administration of this 'Starter flat' would be arranged by admin via 16+ Accommodation Panel and this would be a placement change. Requests would be made in the usual way by completing the referral form and requesting agenda item at Accommodation Panel to consider approval to the request. Accommodation Panel would need to consider any potential issues or risks of the young person being referred and any support needs. Should the request be approved dates will be offered for the stay around the needs of the young person and flat availability.

#### **4.2 Planning the stay**

Prior to any move to the 'Starter' flat a statutory review meeting should be held as this is a placement change. Young people staying in the flat will be supported by Starters floating support in addition to their Social Worker/Personal Adviser and their parent/ carer and consideration to inviting Starters worker to this statutory review meeting to ensure plans are in place i.e. finances, support with menu planning, support with budgeting and so on and will arrange visits throughout the young person's stay to support/monitor progress.

#### 4.3 On Admission

**On the day of admission** a meeting will be held with the young person, Starters and Social worker/ personal adviser to complete the 'licence agreement' which will outline the expectations (Do's and Don'ts) and show the young person around the flat and complete the 'admission stay checklist'. A welcome/information pack will be provided outlining local amenities and facilities/bus routes etc..

**Within 5 working days** a placement planning meeting should be held and a statutory review meeting arranged **within 28 days** (20 working days) of the move.

#### 4.4 Support to young person throughout the stay

For LAC/ Care Leavers aged 16-21 years this will be a placement change and the flat will be the young person's main placement/ address for the duration of their stay.

Young people staying in the flat will be supported by Starters floating support in addition to their Social Worker/Personal Adviser and their parent/ carer using the Get Ready for Adult Life toolkit. Young people will be supported to manage their budget/ finances and manage the property throughout their stay.

At least 6-8 weeks before the end of the stay, the social worker/ personal adviser should provide an update 16+ accommodation panel to consider progress made and move on plans for the young person.

#### 4.5 Any disruption/urgent response required

At any point during the stay should there be any breach of the 'licence agreement' or requirement for emergencies services to be contacted an urgent planning meeting should be arranged with 24 hours as this may lead to a decision for the stay to be terminated.

#### 4.6 End of placement

**At least 4 weeks** towards the end of the stay the Social Worker/Personal Adviser should arrange a statutory review/ planning meeting to review the stay/ progress and ensure plans are in place for moving on/ transition either into young person's own tenancy or into supported accommodation if the young person requires ongoing support.

**On the day of leaving**, Starters will complete the 'stay/ inventory checklist' and collect the young person's keys and feedback form.

## 5. **FINANCE/ COSTS**

Stockport Homes will provide the flat within the community. Children's Social Care will pay the rent for 16/17yrs and for care leavers aged 18 years and over the young person will be supported to claim appropriate welfare benefits ie. Housing/ Council Tax Benefit/s.

The young person will require weekly finance to stay at the Starter flat:

For Looked after Children aged 16/17 yrs (Eligible/Relevant care leavers)

- For Eligible care leavers 16/17 yrs Children's Social Care will provide 16+ maintenance allowance of £56.80 (equiv of benefit) and any other assistance to the young person as outlined within their financial pathway plan (this will vary if the young person is in employment).

For 18-21 yrs (Former Relevant care leavers)

- For care leavers aged 18 yrs and over they should be in receipt of weekly income i.e. benefits/training income/wages.

If there are any circumstances where a young person could be financially disadvantaged by a stay in the 'Starter' flat then a financial pathway plan should be completed to request any shortfall/difference so young people are not disadvantaged and the details provided to the Service Manager.

## CHECKLIST/FORMS FOR SET UP OF STARTER FLAT

1. By Starters      Admission/End
  - Licence agreement (Do's and Don'ts)
  - Welcome Pack for 'Starter' flat and information (local amenities and facilities, GP, bus routes, shops etc).
  - Stay/Inventory checklist
  - Emergency contacts –GP, OOH, Police etc..
  - Cheap menus/recipes/cook books
  - Tips for money saving/shopping
  - Local formation/bus timetables.
  - YP/ Carers feedback form
  
2. By SW/PA's      Young Person's Support Pack during their stay
  - Pathway Plan
  - Diary sheet
  - Menu planning sheets
  - Shopping lists
  - Budgeting sheets

Guidance and resources for staff/ carers
  
3. Service/ Team Manager/s
  - Operational Procedures
  - Referral Form (Hub form)
  - Get Ready for Adult Life toolkit