



Derby City Council Early Intervention and Integrated Services

Intentionally Homeless Protocol

This process is not intended to cover families who have No Recourse to Public Funds or Young People 16-18 yrs who are homeless

Background

Due to an increase in the numbers of families requesting support from Local Authority Housing and People Services the pressure upon the budget is significant.

In 2011 in England, 69,460 children (or expected babies) were living in homeless households, three quarters of the total accepted figure. There was an increase of 37% of people being placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation, only a small number of which originated from abroad (The Guardian, S Rogers 8th March 2012)

Apart from the financial cost to the council of families who present as intentionally homeless; homelessness in general has a significant impact upon the health and development of children. Families may become isolated from their communities, cultural and friendship links. The children may find their education and health needs disrupted and poor housing conditions affect both the physical and mental health of the children and their carers. In one study conducted by Shelter, parents described their children as frightened insecure or worried about the future. There was evidence of children experiencing mood swings, nervousness, bad tempers, bedwetting and disturbed sleep patterns. A study in Birmingham identified that 40% of the homeless children studied continued to suffer mental health and development problems one year after re-housing. Homeless children in comparison to their peers who live in their own homes have a higher chance of lower academic achievement. A Shelter survey found that homeless children missed an average of 55 school days annually due to the disruptions of moving into or between temporary accommodations. Half of parents asked described their children as often "unhappy or depressed".

It is therefore crucial that a process for the management of Intentionally Homeless families is agreed between People Services and Housing Options as a matter of urgency, if we are to avoid both unnecessary

expenditure and continuing to harm the health and welfare of children who are considered homeless.

Process

See flow chart at Appendix One

A – Housing Options

Immediately following an intentionally homeless decision being made regarding a household with children, Housing Options will inform the First Contact Team or, in the case of a family already receiving services, the Integrated Safeguarding Service, of the reasonable notice period given to the family to secure their own accommodation. At the end of this period People's Services are likely to become financially responsible for emergency accommodation. At all stages, the key issue is to work in partnership with the Housing Advisor, Keyworker or Lead Professional and the family to identify any alternative accommodation with friends or family as well as looking at all other housing options.

.B – Careline - Actions for Families presenting out of hours

Careline act as an agent on behalf of Housing Options

In the event that there is no alternative but to place the family in Bed and Breakfast accommodation

- A) Careline staff are to make every attempt to secure alternative accommodation with friends and family following the steps B to C as below
- B) Accommodation will only be offered to the adults accompanying the child(ren) where it is reasonable to assume they are one household
- C) A telephone call to the Landlord of the B&B should be made by Careline staff upon admission of the family to B&B to confirm that the adult(s) has an accompanying child.

C – First Contact Team

If a family present as intentionally homeless to FCT

FCT are to establish eligibility as far as possible by asking

- the recent whereabouts of the family
- if benefits are being claimed
- work history
- previous accommodation history.

- The First Contact Team are to notify Housing Options

If a household is deemed intentionally homeless by Housing Options and they have no alternative housing, temporary accommodation will (continue to) be provided. For all households with children, Housing Options will immediately notify the Integrated Safeguarding Service using the recognised referral form. FCT are to progress the referral for the family to be allocated a social worker from the Reception Service to undertake a Single Assessment to identify the needs of the family; working in partnership with Housing Options until permanent accommodation is secured. This is not to be contact merely in the form of a letter and support should be given prior to the end of the reasonable period given by Housing Options.

HOUSING BENEFIT FORMS MUST BE COMPLETED AT THE TIME OF TRANSFER. THERE IS A SIMPLE TRANSFER FORM IF THE PLACEMENT REMAINS THE SAME BUT PROOF OF THE COST OF THE PLACEMENT IS STILL REQUIRED. IF ANY ALTERNATIVE ACCOMODATION IS FOUND i.e. PLACEMENT MOVE TO DIFFERENT B&B COMPLETE NEW HB FORM MUST BE COMPLETED, IF NOT THE HOUSING BENEFIT PAYMENT WILL CEASE

- After the reasonable period of accommodation support by Housing Options; accommodation will only be agreed by Children's Services for a maximum of ONE month from completion of the form. Agreement to continue can only be made in consultation with the Deputy Head of Service Safeguarding or Head of Service Early Intervention.
- Deposits for privately rented accommodation will only be agreed on the basis that rent and Housing Benefit is paid directly to the Landlord
- The Keyworker/Lead Professional is to physically accompany the family to Housing Services to search for housing on a weekly basis if they are not bidding on properties.
- In addition the Keyworker/Lead Professional is to assist the family in person by searching local papers for privately rented accommodation – this is to be recorded on the LCS records.
- The expectation of the partnership arrangements between Housing Options, allocated worker and the family is;
- The family are expected to access and bid for properties on Homefinder
- Housing Options Advisors will monitor bidding by Intentionally Homeless families and advise the Keyworker of any action necessary i.e. should families fail to bid or if a property becomes available

- The allocated worker will be proactive in liaising with Housing Options and the family
- In the event of the family not accessing Homefinder or looking at other options i.e. privately rented properties, the allocated worker will physically support the family to do so
- There is an expectation that in the event of suitable accommodation being located, the Section 17 responsibility for accommodation will cease.
- **Therefore the worker will make it clear to the family that they need to accept the identified suitable property as any other financial support for accommodation will be withdrawn immediately.**

Appendix 1 Flowchart

Intentionally Homeless Process

Family present as Intentionally Homeless

