Dear Bob

I am writing to you to provide additional information following my appearance before the Local Government and Communities Committee on 1st November, as part of the Committee’s inquiry into homelessness in Scotland.

For convenience, I have highlighted the Committees request for information below, followed by my response;

work that will be undertaken by the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group in relation to the perceived increased visibility of rough sleeping, which he indicated was contrary to the data available currently;

Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick and colleagues undertook a piece of research for Social Bite which looked at rough sleeping in the four main Scottish cities;


correspondence to local authorities, and responses, in relation to sharing practice from Glasgow City Council in identifying families in rented accommodation who may be affected by the benefit cap;

In order to do this, I am going to ask Glasgow for more information on their approach, to better inform this letter. We also intend to ask COSLA to do a write out to their contacts to find out if we would want to acknowledge or recommend any similar best practice in supporting housing benefit claimants and/or those who are in receipt of Universal Credit.

We will request a speedy response and share this correspondence with the Committee in due course.
and correspondence to local authorities in relation to their responsibilities to care leavers

I have provided the text of my letter to local authorities dated June 2017 in Annex A of this correspondence. The text from the 21 responses received is provided separately at Annex B.

Renfrewshire’s cost benefit analysis work on Housing First

This work is currently underway, so there is no report to share with Committee at this stage. This can be sent to Committee once it is in the public domain.

During the session, the Convener referred to the temporary accommodation management fee which is no longer paid through housing benefit subsidy from the DWP from April 2017. An amount (£22.5m) was transferred to the Scottish Government to distribute to local authorities and appeared in the 2017-18 budget. A formula for distribution was agreed with COSLA in March 2017. (approximately)

Please provide further information on:

What basis was the £22.5m distributed to local authorities

As agreed with COSLA, the allocation of the £22.5m for 2017/18 was based on the percentage share of homeless households in temporary accommodation across all local authorities, using a 3-year average (2014-16), based on published Scottish Government “Homelessness in Scotland” data.

How will the Scottish Government be monitoring the distribution of that money to determine whether that amount is sufficient for local authorities to cover their management costs?

Management of temporary accommodation is a matter for local authorities. Scottish Government has no formal role in monitoring its management and similarly, once the funding has gone to local authorities through the settlement, the local authority decides how it wishes to deploy the money.

I look forward to the Committee’s recommendations on this important issue.

KEVIN STEWART
June 2017

Dear Head(s) of Housing

I am writing to you about the provision of housing for young people who have experienced the care system.

I met with Mark McDonald MSP, Minister for Childcare and Early Years in February as part of a series of bilateral meetings with Ministerial colleagues about how we can best work together to address homelessness. I emphasised my determination to ensure that, as corporate parents, we are working to achieve the best possible housing outcomes for our children and young people.

Mr McDonald outlined his broad plans to engage with local authorities about Corporate Parenting and the implementation of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 in the coming period and we agreed that, in light of the importance of the issue, it would be helpful if I contact local authorities about the specific issue of housing and homelessness.

I recently addressed the Ending Youth Homelessness conference, organised by the Rock Trust, at which the housing issues faced by young people leaving care were highlighted. We know that while the numbers of young people who apply as homeless to local authorities directly on leaving care is relatively small and has been falling in recent years, the numbers increase when we consider those facing homelessness who have left care some time previously. We are therefore keen to identify how the housing solutions identified by the throughcare and aftercare process can help to provide more sustainable outcomes for young people.

In 2013, Housing Options Protocol Guidance for Corporate Parents was issued by the Scottish Government which sought to clarify the links between the corporate parent role and the housing and homelessness policy landscape in Scotland. This included the development of the person centred, housing options approaches to the prevention of homelessness across Scotland since 2010.

We acknowledge that most young people leaving care benefit from support over an extended period into adulthood. The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 has updated and extended eligibility for Aftercare services in order to provide additional advice, guidance and assistance. This supports young people to make successful transitions out of the looked after system, based on plans that reflect their individual needs and aspirations, backed up by consistent, personalised relationship-based support from local authorities and other corporate parents. Guidance explaining the duties under Part 10 (Aftercare) of the 2014 Act was published in 2016 to explain the aftercare support to be provided to eligible care leavers.
I would be interested in feedback and views from you on:
- your processes for identifying appropriate sustainable housing solutions for those leaving care;
- how your current arrangements are informed by a housing options approach as recommended in guidance; and
- whether there is anything further that the Scottish Government needs to do to facilitate good practice in this area

I would be grateful if you could contact my officials with this information by 18th August 2017. Please submit this information by e-mail to the Scottish Government Homelessness Team at matthew.howarth@gov.scot or phone 0141 242 5436 for further information.

Your feedback will help inform future bilateral approaches to this issue and will also help to inform the workplan of the Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group, which will be refreshed and relaunched in the coming period.

KEVIN STEWART
ANNEX B

HOUSING PROVISION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE THAT HAVE EXPERIENCED THE CARE SYSTEM – LOCAL AUTHORITY RESPONSES TO LETTER FROM MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING IN JUNE 2017

ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY CHIEF HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS (ALACHO)

You haven’t specifically asked for a response from ALACHO and the very specific questions that you have asked will, in any event, require a practitioner rather than a policy based response.

Having spoken to our members about this issue I’m sure you will receive a wide range of replies that demonstrate both the strong commitment across the local authority housing sector to meeting the needs of this client group and good evidence of joint working with colleagues in Social Care, Education, Community Justice and a range of third sector organisations.

I am also confident that you will see good evidence of the use of “Housing Options” type approaches to ensure that looked after young people are informed both of their rights and the choices available to them so that they can remain in control of their housing journey.

Your third question, whether there is anything further that the Scottish Government needs to do to facilitate good practice in this area is, however, one where we can offer some thoughts. In particular we would suggest the following:

- Support for research into good practice and what works including work to promote examples of good practice that the research identifies;
- Funding for alternative housing models including shared accommodation. The current affordable housing programme only funds affordable housing let on Scottish Secure Tenancies. These are not suitable for use in shared accommodation and a more flexible approach could help develop new forms of housing for looked after young people and young single people more generally;
- Improving the recording of information by amending the HL1 form to include information on all formerly looked after young people, not just those that were accommodated;
- Leading a discussion about the experience of being looked after, the life skills of those emerging from this from of support and developing better models for responding to those with the most challenging needs and behaviours;
- Considering developing a Self Directed Support type funding model for looked after young people in the years after age 16 to ensure that they have access to the services and the support they need independent of their accommodation;

We hope that these comments and suggestions are useful, in any event we look forward to participating in the process of improving services and outcomes for this client group.
ANGUS

We have implemented a Housing Options for Care Leavers Protocol. This protocol ensures the effective discharge of corporate parenting responsibilities by jointly addressing the diverse accommodation needs of young people leaving care; preventing homelessness and ensuring sustainable housing outcomes.

The protocol for young people leaving care was agreed between the People and Communities Directorates in 2013.

The objectives of the protocol are:
- To jointly assess and meet the diverse housing and support needs of young people leaving care
- To jointly ensure staff are aware of the housing needs of young people leaving care and the obligation of each agency to meet those needs.
- To agree a joint approach to young people assessed as high risk of tenancy failure.

Prior to the young person’s care placement ending, a Housing Officer (Housing Options) and Through care and After care (TC/AC) case worker meet together with the young person to go over the Independent Living Assessment. Which is part of the options for housing and support, the associated tenancy responsibilities and agreeing on the most appropriate housing option.

Care Leavers are awarded outright priority for an allocation of housing, preventing the requirement to be assessed under homeless legislation. All offers of housing are agreed by the Housing Officer (Housing Options) and TC/AC case worker and consideration is given to the young person’s assessed support, health & well-being and education and employment needs in order to determine suitability of an offer.

To assist care leavers in setting up and settling into their new homes Angus Council properties offered through the protocol are decorated prior to the young person moving in. The decoration work is carried out in partnership with the Criminal Justice Unpaid Work Team. The Young Person, TC/AC case worker and Housing Officer agree what work is required in terms of decoration.

Joint working continues throughout the tenancy: the TC/AC worker attends the viewing and sign up with the young person and is notified of any tenancy issues or complaints so this can be jointly addressed with the young person.

A multi-disciplinary panel has been established and meets quarterly throughout the year to identify solutions and monitor housing and support outcomes for care leavers. The panel includes members from Housing, Community Safety, Through Care After Care; Housing Support Services; and other agencies and partner housing providers. Where there are significant risks that the young person’s placement may break down before a suitable tenancy is secured a referral is made to the joint panel and an emergency meeting is convened within 48 hours. In the event of a breakdown in the tenancy, or where concerns escalate or risks are identified, the
case is considered by a joint panel so that issues can be addressed in a joint response of the earliest opportunity and any learning opportunities identified.

Millgate Loan Supported Accommodation

The protocol allows for the needs of children who present the greatest risks, or who are the most vulnerable, to be considered as far in advance as possible. To be most effective, however, this approach relies on the availability of a range of support and housing provision to meet the range of individual requirements and needs. While there is no single or simple solution to these issues, providing a wider range of supported accommodation options and offering young people a more protected environment in which to develop their skills will significantly help care leavers make a positive transition to independent living in mainstream housing.

The Scottish Government via the Affordable Housing Supply programme provided funding to help bring two unoccupied blocks of Council owned flats in Millgate Loan, Arbroath, back into use. One of the blocks of 6 flats was re developed to provide the supported accommodation facility and the second block of flats was redeveloped to offer single general needs tenancies to the Common Housing Register waiting list.

The supported accommodation, providing 4 self contained flats, a training flat and office accommodation for the Throughcare and Aftercare team, has been operational since July 2015. The allocation of flats is agreed through the multi-disciplinary panel established under the joint working protocol referred to above. The young people enter into an occupancy agreement that sets out the financial arrangements, the expectations of them and what they will receive in terms of support. Placements are expected to last between 6 and 12 months and support with independent living skills is provided during office hours by staff from the onsite Throughcare and Aftercare Team, and a concierge service operates at nights and weekends. This supported accommodation provision allows the care leavers to develop the necessary skills for independent living, such as budgeting and housing management skills. Once the young person is ready to move on, the Housing team are notified and their application goes live with outright priority awarded. This enables the young person to make a planned transition from supported accommodation into a mainstream tenancy.

Work is ongoing to develop this initiative further, into a care and cluster model, expanding on the number of supported units available in the Millgate Loan vicinity for young people as demand requires.

The protocol and multi-disciplinary panel meetings have also allowed us to consider the needs of young people leaving care when reviewing and developing other policies and protocols, such as our Allocations policy and Supported Housing Protocol.
The core members of the multi-disciplinary panel are currently organising multi-agency networking events in Angus to highlight the needs of young people leaving care and ensure we continue to work collaboratively to achieve the best outcomes for young people. These events will feature young people who will talk through their experiences.

HL1 monitoring shows that the numbers of homeless applications made by applicants who were previously looked after as a child by the local authority has reduced by 48% in 2015/16 compared to 2011/12.

Work is on-going between Housing and Through care and Aftercare Teams to produce detailed performance monitoring reports to monitor housing outcomes and tenancy sustainment more effectively for care leavers. These detailed reports are currently being built in house and are being created to monitor: the assessment and rehousing journey and timescales to ensure we are meeting re-housing needs at the right times for young people; emergency temporary accommodation requests from young people leaving care to ensure this is prevented where possible; and tenancy outcomes, ensuring we are learning from any failed tenancies and including monitoring of any tenancy issues, so these can be addressed jointly at an early stage.

Key barriers to facilitating good practice in this area

Access to support services and continued support for people with multiple and complex needs is key to preventing tenancy failure and future homelessness for care leavers. We have found that where a young person has multiple needs, they can face barriers to access services, particularly young people with a borderline learning disability or young people who have mental health problems with added drug and alcohol issues. Engagement difficulties often results in services withdrawing their support from individuals and it can be difficult to re-engage or re-refer into these services.

Other barriers include:
- Availability of single person accommodation
- Affordability and welfare reform, particularly for under 35’s
- Availability of flexible, non time limited support services
- Difficulties accessing private rented sector accommodation, particularly with the risk of care leavers facing financial hardship after they are no longer supported financially by children’s services

These could be addressed through both national and local led initiatives such as shared tenancy schemes for care leavers; rent protection schemes for PRS landlords; protection measures for care leavers against welfare reform; further commitment to affordable housing development; and ensuring resources for supporting preventative and support services.
ARGYLL & BUTE

Regarding the specific queries raised in your letter, I can advise of the following circumstances in this authority:-

- **Your Processes for Identifying Appropriate Sustainable Housing Solutions for those leaving Care**

  The Council’s Housing Services are involved in the “Pathway Planning” process for these individuals. Trained and qualified housing staff will agree a suitable housing solution for each case in consultation with the young person. The types of housing solutions available can include: Supported Lodgings, Temporary Supported Tenancies and mainstream Housing Association tenancies – it should be noted that this council is a stock transfer authority and no longer owns or manages its own housing stock, therefore we rely on close partnership working with our RSL colleagues in the area. The Common Allocation policy operating in Argyll and Bute awards the maximum points to young people leaving care who have agreed that they are ready for independent living.

  From a Strategic point of view Housing Services attend a Central Throughcare Aftercare Forum where various agencies including 3rd sector Housing Support Organisations and Who Cares Scotland meet to discuss the impact of legislative changes will have on Looked After and Accommodated young people e.g Welfare Reform. In addition to the Central Forum we attend Local Fora across the Local Authority area.

- **How your current arrangements are informed by a housing options approach as recommended in the guidance**

  Argyll and Bute Council has an online housing options self-assessment tool which can be used by young people. There are housing support contracts so young people can be assisted to complete the assessment either by social work or housing support workers. This Council is also an active member of the Tayside, Fife and Central Housing Options HUB partnership. We are currently working with Who Cares Scotland to encourage Throughcare clients to complete a module on housing options with a view to the young care leavers carrying out an audit of our Housing Options policies and procedures. This process will be supported by the Scottish Housing Network.

- **Whether there is anything further that the Scottish Government needs to do to facilitate good practice in this area**
The Scottish Government have been very supportive of the HUBs as well as with the development of a bespoke training toolkit for Housing Options; which we would use to increase awareness and understanding of the housing options process with looked after and accommodated as well as throughcare young people. Continued provision of guidance and financial support for the activity of the HUBs, sharing of best practice in engaging with this particular client group, and the delivery of Housing Options services at a local level would help to facilitate good practice in this area.

COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is in the process of developing a partnership approach to identifying housing (and associated support) for Care Leavers with housing requirement.

The Comhairle’s Housing Services Team has recently offered up a former Temporary Accommodation unit in Stornoway to our Education and Children’s Services Department, for use as an accommodation unit for young people. This is a five bed unit, with 24/7 staff coverage. The property, called The Old House, will be able to accommodate young homeless people (including Care Leavers) who require additional support needs. Support will be available on-site, but also from other Education establishments.

Young Care Leavers with a Housing requirement would initially be housed in supported accommodation provided by the Education And Children’s Services Dept. Assessments would be carried out at this stage to determine the best route towards their own tenancies. From here, they would move to The Old House where they would have their own room and be able to receive targeted support.

After a period in The Old House, the proposal is that the young people will move to supported accommodation in partnership with the local Western Isles Foyer, where there will be direct experience of managing a tenancy and associated life skills. The Foyer is also able to provide advice and training on employment issues. After a period in the Foyer, the young person should be in a position to take on a full tenancy with Hebridean Housing Partnership, the local Registered Social Landlord. This approach would allow a Housing Options view to be taken at several stages in the process.

This approach also allows the opportunity for a young person to ‘step back’ to a previous stage, if it was felt that they were not yet ready for the next stage in the process.

At present The Old House is in the process of completing registration with the Care Inspectorate.

As I mentioned, I hope this information is of interest. I would be happy to provide further information if required.
Provision of housing for young people who have experienced the care system.

Dumfries and Galloway Corporate Parenting Group are fully aware of the housing challenges facing young people as they make the transition from direct experience of the care system to living independently as successful young adults.

The journey and challenges facing care experienced young people at times cannot be underestimated however corporately we have over the last few years tried to address this by establishing a joined up approach to planning and delivering a housing options approach for care experienced young people.

We held a multi-agency Corporate Parenting Day in which care experienced young people were instrumental in planning and delivering, in order, to ensure that the diverse range of participants and stakeholders would make a commitment to the Care Leavers Covenant and seek to make a difference in the lives of care experienced young people.

As a rural community, over a wide and diverse area, there are fundamental challenges facing us in order to ensure that young people have a choice of accommodation as near to where they live as possible while still supporting them to pursue employment or further education in order to attain their own personal outcomes and to minimise the number of young people who present to our homeless colleagues.

We are ambitious that young people who have experience of care do not present as homeless now or in the future. However we are realistic to acknowledge that the trauma and dysfunction which they have experienced will have created vulnerabilities which may bring them to the attention of our homelessness team at singleton or on various occasions throughout their adult lives.
In order to address this we have developed the following:

Kinship or family options – For some young people when they are about to leave care they re-establish relationships with direct or extended family members whom they wish to live with. Such options are considered and pathway plans are established to consider the appropriateness and sustainability of such housing options. For some young people they are insistent that they must try this first and will not consider other housing suggestions. In circumstances when this option fails young people are supported to consider alternative housing options as part of their pathway plan.

Fostering Service – Not all young people will want to move on at 18 years of age and many continue to live within their fostering placement until they feel ready to move on or go to college, university or seek alternative housing options.

Supported Lodgings Service – This has been developed to offer young people the opportunity to live within a family setting while building their independent living skills within the security of a family setting. Many of our supported lodgings families have formally been foster carers who have continued to offer a family home setting post 18 years of age in order that the young people can maintain the stability and continuity of their fostering placement into their adult lives. Young people do not have to have lived with a foster family to be considered for a supported lodgings placement. Some young people will be offered this option either as an alternative to their family circumstances or as a transition arrangement when leaving residential care.

Not all supported lodgings families are foster carers some families or single adults have come forward to support care experienced young people due to a change in their own family experiences and feel they have the time, capacity and accommodation to offer a vulnerable young person. Our supported lodgings service is registered with the Care Inspectorate. This service offers young people the opportunity to receive support when they need it but allows them to build their independent living skills both within and out with the home environment building housing ready skills for when they move on.

Holm Park View is a partnership project between Dumfries and Galloway Council, Dumfries and Galloway Housing Partnership and the Big Lottery to offer supported housing to care experienced young people 16-24 years of age. The project will receive referrals from children and families social workers or leaving care workers on behalf of care experienced young people. A multi-agency group including colleagues from homelessness teams meet to consider these referrals. A young person will be allocated a 2 bedroom individual house in which they can stay for up to 2 years while they develop their independent living skills which will ensure they are housing ready for their own tenancy when they are ready to leave the project. The service has housing support staff on site and each young person will have a pathway plan which will determine their individual outcomes and goals. A concierge service is also provided to cover evenings and weekends in order to help the young people to develop appropriate gate keeping skills while maintaining the safety and security of the project. When a young person is ready to move on Holm Park View staff will support the young person and outreach support can be provided in order to make the transition as seamless as possible. This service is based in Dumfries which is one of our main population centres in the region which means that not all care experienced young people wish to consider this option.
A close working relationship has been developed with our Housing Options and Homeless team to ensure that young people are provided with the most appropriate Housing Options advice to ensure they do not present as Homeless and a more planned approach is adopted to finding housing solutions.

At this present time some Registered Social Landlords in Dumfries and Galloway participate in a Common Housing Register and Common Allocations Policy which provides a single point of access to their housing stock. Care experienced young people from Dumfries and Galloway are awarded priority status for housing to help ensure a managed, and fully supported, transition to independent living. This means all participating landlords recognise their role as corporate parents by working together to help reduce the risk of homelessness. To achieve a successful transition to independence, all referrals for permanent housing should be the result of careful advanced planning that ensures assessed support, and care, needs are met. This may be provided via local housing support provider, care provider or outreach from a designated service which may include youth justice, residential care, fostering, employment services, health services including mental health and substance misuse services etc.

Due to the rural nature of the region some young people will access private accommodation as this may best meet their needs and is available in the area in which they wish to live. For these young people they will receive or be offered the same support as their peers who have accessed mainstream accommodation. They will be supported in accordance to their pathway plan.

The Council has put in place a Strategic Housing Forum to take forward the work to put in place the Council’s Local Housing Strategy. This is a multi-agency group that aims to offer a wide range of stakeholders the opportunity to participate in the strategy development process. This includes representatives from Children’s Services, Registered Social Landlord and the Third Sector to ensure the housing needs of care experienced young people are fully considered.

In addition, our Housing Options and Homeless service has recently developed a multi-agency Homeless forum which meets bi-monthly to address the underlying issues of homelessness and challenges throughout Dumfries and Galloway. This is a newly developed forum which is ambitious to raise the profile and reduce the level of homelessness throughout our region. There will be a keen focus on Homelessness prevention in the future with a focus on partnership working across the sectors to ensure Dumfries and Galloway has a robust and effective approach to this going forward.

It has been noted that approximately 20% of those adults who access our current homelessness services have been care experienced young people at some point in their lives. This is a figure which we hope to understand and seek to reduce going forward. There are many reasons why an adult who has previously had a care experience in their past may present as homeless this may include incidents of domestic violence, relationship breakdown, substance misuse, mental health issues or a history of offending behaviour. Many of these features can present when the young person leaves care and we have noted that it is imperative that a comprehensive support package is put in place to support care
experienced young people make a positive transition to adult life. Many will accept the support being offered while a minority will choose not to engage which can have a significant impact on their future adult lives and their housing experiences. The multi-agency approach to Housing Options will be aimed at improving instances of non-engagement in the future.

It is important that we ensure that children receive the help they need as early as possible in their lives. Dumfries and Galloway Children’s Services Plan aims to deliver an early intervention and prevention agenda in order where possible to minimise the number of children becoming Looked After and subsequently reduce the number of care experienced young people in the future.

We acknowledge that the Housing Options approach has evolved to change our attitude and culture to creatively consider future housing solutions for all young people and this model ensures they assume responsibility for their actions, consequences for their behaviour and enables them to be active participants in considering what future housing options are available to them and would best meet their needs.

I trust the information provided will help inform the national landscape of housing services available to care experienced young people.
DUNDEE

I refer to your letter of 15 June 2017 requesting information from local authorities about the provision of housing for young people who have experienced the care system and have pleasure in providing relevant information on the situation in Dundee below.

- Processes for identifying appropriate sustainable accommodation housing solutions for those leaving care.

Planning Services

Dundee Corporate Parenting Plan 2017-2020

Dundee City Council Corporate Parenting Plan promotes the rights of looked after children, young people and care leavers. The established framework detailed in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 details the duties and responsibilities for relevant public bodies. A range of provision for Continuing Care and Aftercare for young people born after 1 April 1999 up to their 26th birthday is a key priority. This plan was developed and evidenced from a range of sources and consultation. The views of children, young people and care leavers along with key partners, self-evaluation exercises, performance information and inspection reports was utilised to develop this plan. Housing Services have been fully involved in the development of this Plan.

The Tayside Plan for Children, Young People and Families 2017 -2020

Community Planning Partnerships of Angus, Dundee and Perth & Kinross have worked collaboratively to develop the Tayside Plan. This Plan focuses on reducing inequalities and improve outcomes for all of Tayside’s children. It sets out the joint vision and priorities of three local unitary authorities, NHS Tayside and other local and national partners.
Dundee Champions Board

Dundee’s Champions Board is the longest established in Scotland, and has been instrumental in promoting the approach Scotland-wide.

Life Changes Trust awarded funding 3 years of funding in April 2016 to allow care experienced young people to have a bigger say in the decisions that affect them.

The money is used to support Dundee’s local ‘Champions Board’ which provides a platform for young people to talk directly to local authority staff, Elected Members and service providers to ensure that decisions which affect their lives are informed by their own experiences. This will support the engagement and empowerment of even more care experienced young people across Dundee, allowing them to set the agenda around their futures.

Range of Housing Provision

Dundee has a range of provision for Care Leavers:

Continuing Care Flats

A range of Continuing Care Flats are being set up. There are currently 4 flats in place with an intention to increase this to around 10 flats. These flats will be linked to Residential Homes and are intended to be the first step to independence for some of the Care Leavers. They will still be part of the residential home and will be allocated a worker from within the home. The young person can attend groups and activities or simply “go home for tea” some evenings. This will increase their level of independence and confidence so that they can manage an independent lifestyle.

Dundee Youth Housing Service

Dundee Youth Housing Service which is provided by Action for Children (AFC), provides temporary supported accommodation to 16-25-year-old homeless young people who often present with multiple and complex needs. The service provides a person centred and holistic approach to meeting individual needs and supporting young people to learn necessary skills and have confidence in living independently.

This service works closely in partnership with the Housing and Throughcare/Aftercare teams to support young people leaving the care system who require additional support to make the transition and gain the skills to manage their own tenancy. This enables young people to try living independently within a safe and nurturing environment, where mistakes can be made and learned from. The assessment of need and risk enables the service to assist and support young people with multiple and complex needs to access specialist services in relation to issues such as mental health and substance misuse.

In Dundee schools, AFC also coordinate the Housing Education for Youth Programme (HEY! Dundee). This is an early intervention, homeless prevention programme for 15 and 16 year olds. Action for Children co - facilitate the programme through all Dundee secondary schools and it is delivered in partnership with other third sector and statutory agencies.
Carolina Mews

As a result of the Big Lottery Life Transitions Fund, the Carolina Mews Project has been supporting vulnerable care leavers to make successful life transitions from care into their own independent living within their own tenancies. These young people are likely to have had many moves in the looked after system. The project offers them stability, positive role models, consistent level of support and preparation for independence. This group of young people often lack family or community supports. Research and evidence suggests that emotional and consistent support is crucial to the success of these young people.

The Carolina Mews Project achieves improved outcomes for young people through providing individual tailored support, concentrating on areas such as:

- Accommodation including bedsits, flats and communal areas providing the safety, stability and nurturing that this group needs and gives them every opportunity for improved outcomes in the future
- A holistic, caring approach where they will get all the support and level of care they require based on their individual needs
- Work experience, training or further education
- Life skills
- Personal development provided through mentoring and support from a consistent group of adults for as long as it takes

At their own pace young people are supported by staff in this transitional period. Working in collaboration with a range of agencies including Social Work, Health, Housing, training providers and voluntary organisations brings additional knowledge and skills, strengthening the project in meeting young people’s needs.

Permanent tenancies - Joint Housing and Children and Families Services Protocol

Dundee has a Joint Housing & Children and Families Protocol which has been in place since 2013. The aim of this Protocol is to ensure a co-ordinated response to the accommodation needs of care leavers. It outlines the legal and operational framework agreed between the Departments for providing assessment, planning and appropriate accommodation for young people leaving care.

- No young person will have to register as homeless in order to access accommodation on leaving care.
- A range of accommodation and support solutions will be made available to young people on discharge from care and while they continue to receive support from the Throughtcare and Aftercare Service.
- The above provision will be based on the best interest of the young person and take their views into account.

Outcomes

The Protocol will ensure that a care leaver receives:

- A consistent service.
- A completed Pathway Assessment and Plan with their accommodation views and needs identified.
- Access to accommodation which considers the young person’s needs and choices.
- Access to an appeals and resolution service which is understood by them.
- Appropriate support during their transition to independence in the community.
The Protocol is designed to ensure that no young person will lack support to achieve independence and stability in the community. It promotes the principle that care leavers will be provided with the most secure form of tenancy available to them.

Currently Dundee City Council is working with Registered Social Landlords and third sector organisations within the city to further develop and enhance the Protocol to include additional access to social rented housing.

Where it is also in the interests of the client access to private rented accommodation may be considered. Examples of this may be where the young person is attending college with a view to moving on to university; where a quiet area which currently does not have social housing may meet their needs etc.

- How current arrangements are informed by a Housing Options approach as recommended in guidance.

**Housing Options Protocol for Care Leavers**

The Principles of Good Practice detailed in the Housing Options Protocol for Care Leavers are:

- Connection and Belonging
- Readiness of Care Leavers
- Corporate Parenting
- Care leavers Views
- Information Sharing
- Equality & Diversity

Dundee has been working towards the above principles for several years now and work continues as services and outcomes are monitored and measured to ensure that they are meeting the needs of Care Leavers. Joint working across and between both internal and external agencies is a key feature of positive outcomes.

The identification of care leavers with more multiple and complex needs has recently been a key action area. With the advent of the Youth Housing Options Service, Dundee has not required as much temporary accommodation for young people as it has in the past. This has allowed the ‘very supported’ unit at Action for Children to be utilised specifically for care leavers with more multiple and complex needs. Work is ongoing through action items on the Plans and Housing participate in these meetings to ensure that needs are being met.

To show the links with the Housing Options service several examples of current good practice in Dundee are detailed below.

**Allocation of Housing for Care Leavers**

When young people are ready to move on to independent living special rules apply on the Housing Allocations Policy. They do not join mainstream queues; as a separate award of 500 points is made and a “one to one” person to property match is carried out. All potential properties are address profiled to ensure the demography of the block is suitable.
A monthly liaison meeting is held to discuss the needs of young people prior to matches and offers of accommodation being made. A joint approach is carried out and the Lettings Team Leader, Anti-Social Behaviour Team Leader, Throughcare Team Leader, and where appropriate, representatives from the Third Sector meet to discuss all individual cases. This is also an opportunity to discuss any issues that may have arisen in existing tenancies.

The Housing Service will ensure that there is a named support worker from the Throughcare Team on all tenant accounts. Where Housing staff identify an issue e.g. rent, neighbour problems etc. they will contact this worker in the first instance.

Where young people’s needs are not met by the above, a person centred approach will be taken. Once the young person’s needs has been fully assessed then accommodation solutions will be sought.

**Action for Children (AFC) – Supported Housing for Young People**

Since 1991 Action For Children Dundee Youth Housing Service (DYHS) has provided a range of temporary accommodation and support services. This is a partnership between Dundee City Council Neighbourhood Services, Children and Families Services and local Housing Associations. This service caters for the most vulnerable young people in the city aged 16-25. This service accommodates both homeless young people and those with a care experience.

Currently, AFC manage and support 37 units of accommodation in a core and cluster model across the City. The majority of this accommodation is individual flats but there are also some two bedroomed shared flats. These units provide a realistic, safe and secure environment which allows young people to develop and enhance their life skills. These units of accommodation have access to 24/7 support on site. Individual flats are linked to a support staff base.

Young people with more complex needs who require bespoke individualised packages of support are also accommodated in a ‘sheltered’ environment within the wider service. Many of these young people were previously accommodated out with the City due to the complexity of their needs. Remaining in the City allows young people to maintain positive family and community links. This group of young people will require a longer period of stay and any transition to adult services will be at an appropriate phase in their development.

All young people referred have a comprehensive assessment based on individual need and a person centred support plan developed alongside the young person to address and support these assessed needs. In addition AFC promotes inclusion in the wider community.

Access is provided to a range of externally funded activities, examples of which are:

- Gym Passes
- Leisure Facilities
- Outdoor activities
- Educational trip to Auschwitz
- Social skill development via group outings
- Employability issues
- Targeted group work
- Art Classes
- Relaxation Classes
- Money and financial skills
- College courses
- Training courses
- Volunteering
• Holiday trips

AFC also provide work placements for Care Experienced young people as part of the Community Jobs Fund initiative.

Individual outcomes are measured via the SHANARRI indicators. Once a young person is tenancy ready they will move on, with support if required, to a tenancy in the community.

**Antisocial Behaviour Team**

The Antisocial Behaviour Team continue to liaise with the Lettings Team and Throughcare/Aftercare Team regarding young people moving into their first tenancies. Extra checks are carried out to attempt to secure a tenancy that the young person is most likely to be able to sustain and not be placed in a vulnerable situation.

Where issues arise in these tenancies, all efforts will be made by the team with other partners including Children and Families, Housing and Police Scotland to resolve these without taking punitive action against the young person.

The Team have also taken the lead in directing young people involved in antisocial behaviour into more suitable accommodation, either referrals back to Action for Children for supported accommodation or into alternative mainstream accommodation, with outreach support, moving them into another area to give them the opportunity to improve their behaviour without peer pressure from other groups. This has proved successful in several cases recently, where the alternative may have been ASBO or eviction action.

In the last financial year, in relation to 16 – 18 year olds there has been 1 Antisocial Behaviour Order (ASBO) granted (16 yrs) and no evictions carried out due to antisocial behaviour. In this case the young person was not known to care services.

In relation to young people aged 19 – 25 there has been 1 ASBO granted (22 yrs) and one Notice to Quit issued (24 yrs). In both cases these have been issued where the individuals have failed to engage with services and neither of whom had previously been in the care system.

**ASB Diversion**

The Team are also continuing to explore various options for diversion to antisocial behaviour. In the year 2016 – 2017 the Army in collaboration with Police Scotland, Antisocial Behaviour Team, Community Safety Team, SACRO, and Children and Families ran two Youth Advantage Outreach Programmes at Barry Buddon. Although there are no dates planned for this year, Scottish Government have advised they will be reporting soon on continued funding for this course.

There is also encouragement to involve young people in activities that are ongoing in their communities.

Although not in the reporting year, recently, the Antisocial Behaviour Team along with Action for Children have commenced Girls Group, targeting ages 13 – 16 and 16 – 19 years. This runs for a 6 week period and covers a variety of topics such as antisocial behaviour, self-esteem and positive relationships. Evaluations will be carried out in relation to this course shortly and the next course will be aimed at the 16 – 19 age group in first/supported tenancies.

The Team are also open to exploring the need to provide a Young Males’ Group aimed at males of a similar age group and which will cover similar topics and themes.
In addition, the Antisocial Behaviour Team have also requested funding from the Community Safety Local Action Fund to allow them to fund a motorbike course solely from referrals from the Team. Six young people completed this course in early July and the Team are hoping to plan another course in October this year.

Education

The Antisocial Behaviour Team give educational inputs to all S4 pupils across Dundee as part of the Hey! Dundee Project led by Action for Children. This input focuses on antisocial behaviour and how behaviour of individuals or friends can seriously impact the security of a tenancy.

Any additional inputs to schools are provided upon request.

- **Is there anything further that the Scottish Government needs to do to facilitate good practice in this area.**

Promoting and publicising good practice from areas across the country is always helpful in enabling all authorities to adopt best practice and achieve best outcomes for care leavers.

You will see that effective joint working is an important part of our practice here in Dundee and we will continue to improve such partnerships to promote best outcomes.

Scottish Government policies should ensure a complementary approach to the delivery of accommodation and support to different groups. The introduction of Continuing Care has created a bit more of an issue within a complicated landscape between Local Authorities and newly created Adult Health and Social Care Partnerships particularly around the issue of transitions for those young people with learning disability or mental health issues who may have an enduring need for services into adulthood. The Scottish Government should ensure policies focus on a joint approach to accommodation and support to ensure the needs of young people are met appropriately.

The increase in the affordable housing supply allocations is of great assistance in helping local authorities plan into housing provision any requirement for new build accommodation, for example the need for ‘core and cluster models’. We are promoting the provision of one bedroom flats to meet the needs of care leavers. We try to provide new build in areas where this will provide the best opportunities for the Care Leaver to cope where possible within any existing social networks.

I hope that this information is of assistance in informing the work of the Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group.
EAST DUNBARTONSHIRE

Housing/Homelessness and Throughcare/Aftercare

I refer to you letter of 15th June 2017 regarding the above subject.

As requested, please find outlined below East Dunbartonshire Council’s (EDC) approach to preventing homelessness amongst those leaving care and ongoing support and provision for those who are, or, have been throughcare/aftercare clients:

Question 1 – Processes for identifying appropriate sustainable housing solutions for those leaving care;

EDC provides the following services or processes to sustain tenancies, or provides more intensive support for young people leaving care / requiring aftercare when required:

1. Canal Project – A Housing Support project run by Action for Children for 16-25 year olds (including those leaving care). The facility has 6 single en suite bedrooms with shared living room and kitchen facilities, along with 2 further attached flats, for those progressing through the project requiring less support after a few months. Throughcare has 2 places in 6 available to them at the Canal Project and currently one young person who is a care leaver has been referred. Discussions have been ongoing regarding the provision of two more properties with outreach support provided by the Canal Project staff for care leavers. Clyde Valley HA has been assisting but funding difficulties have put this on hold. This provision is required and would provide accommodation for 2-4 care leavers, although move on accommodation would still be an issue for housing given the lack of 1 bed properties throughout the area. Web link is attached below:

https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/in-your-area/services/youth-support-and-leaving-care/east-dunbartonshire-canal-housing-serv/
2. Project 101 – A Housing Advice project based in Kirkintiloch Main Street offers a person centred, case worker approach, offering housing and homelessness advice and sign posting for young people in an informal setting. Web link is attached below:

https://www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/residents/housing/advice-support/project-101

Better access to site is via Council’s facebook page.

3. First Stop Housing – Accommodation offering 17 en suite bedrooms with shared kitchen area. An initial assessment of support needs is carried out to prevent the use of B&B, run by The Mungo Foundation, who sign post new homeless cases to the most appropriate move on supported accommodation, or, temporary furnished accommodation (with less intensive support).

4. Ravenswood – A 9 bedroom facility incorporating two additional bolt-on flats for cases requiring less support. The service offers temporary accommodation and support to homeless households aged 18 years and above who have additional support needs. The facility can accommodate single people, couples and families.

The service provides advice and support to individuals who may have mental health issues, substance misuse issues, learning disabilities or to those who need to develop their independent living skills to maintain a future tenancy. The Ravenswood team also provide outreach advice and support to homeless households living within 3 multiple occupancy homes in the Bearsden area of East Dunbartonshire and Kirkintilloch.

Web link is attached below:
http://www.themungofoundation.org.uk/what-we-do/supported-living/homelessness/ravenswood/
5. East Dunbartonshire Housing First – is a 24 hour support service run for the Council by Turning Point. This is an intensive service offered to a max of 12 individuals who are homeless, aged 18 or over with mental health issues and, or, who are involved in drug misuse. The service places homeless individuals directly into independent tenancies in East Dunbartonshire with no requirement to progress through transitional housing programmes. By sustaining a permanent tenancy in East Dunbartonshire, service users are in a better position to access community support, health care and social benefits. Housing First has supported one young person who was a care leaver. Web links are attached below:


6. Temporary Accommodation – East Dunbartonshire Council currently has a provision of 228 temporary and supported accommodation units, both furnished and unfurnished but it is recognised that most young people require fully furnished accommodation when moving into temporary accommodation. There is still a shortfall in provision and our temporary accommodation strategy is being updated at present to identify what types and where additional temporary accommodation is required.

7. Housing & Social Work Protocol (including those leaving care/ Throughcare). The purpose of this Protocol is to ensure that the support needs of single young homeless people/those leaving care are met through the identification and provision of a co-ordinated package of housing and support services. Protocol is attached as appendix 1. A procedure to assist young people leaving care is also attached as appendix 2.
8. Corporate Parenting - EDC runs a Corporate Parenting Champions programme covering both those being looked after away from home and those looked after at home. The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 places a duty on councils to make sure that once a child is looked after, all elected members and officers of the council, as their corporate parents, are concerned about that child as if s/he was their own. This concern encompasses the child’s education, their health and welfare, where they live, what they do in their leisure time and holidays, how they celebrate their culture and how they receive praise and encouragement for their achievements.

Previously as Housing Manager and now as Strategic Lead - Housing, I have been one of the corporate parents within EDC, amongst a number of senior officers, involved in this programme.

Role of the Corporate Parenting Champion: National policy states that being a good corporate parent means we should: Accept responsibility for the Council’s looked after children and young people; Make their needs a priority; and Seek for them, the same outcomes any good parent would want for their own children.

The role involved: finding out how the young person is doing, getting to know what their potential is by asking the questions that any responsible parent would ask as a champion and being asked to be “a pushy parent.” As a Champion, we receive up to date reports from education, health and social work informing us on the progress of our child. The Corporate Parent Champion then enquires about this information with a telephone call to the service or agency responsible, sharing high expectations. Follow up face to face meetings with the services also take place (e.g. Social Work and Education in particular).

Over the last three years we have had six, twelve and ten champions. We plan for 2017/2018 to increase this back to twelve champions in order to support vulnerable young people.
Within the Council we have a Champions Steering Group and Champions Board with elected member involvement. We are reinvigorating this given the recent Scottish elections and given the change in the make-up of the elected member group.

We are in the process of submitting a bid to the Life Changes Trust which will involve the creation of a young persons’ champions board, which would involve care experienced young people being able to influence decision making on the corporate parenting champions board.

We are also in the process of updating our corporate parenting strategy.

9. Permanent Accommodation - The Council’s allocations policy recognises the housing needs of those leaving care and provides the following opportunities to offer accommodation to young people leaving care either through: the Community Care; or more often the Housing Support route. Further information is provided in appendix 3.

10. Social Work/Health has provided financial support to Young People in order for them to secure student accommodation. Social Work has on a number of occasions also provided private lets for care experienced young people to prevent homelessness. On these occasions the Council has become the guarantor for private lets. Social work support young people leaving care to assist them with the challenges they face and along with partners, all work hard to help them develop the independence, personal resilience and skills to become active and responsible members of our communities. Specifically, training and mentoring covers: managing their front door; managing money; addressing mental health; addictions and self-esteem, in both one to one and group work.
Question 2 - how current arrangements are informed by a housing options approach as recommended in guidance

EDC is part of the West of Scotland Hub. The Hub consists of local authority representatives from East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire, West Dunbartonshire, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, the City of Glasgow Council and Glasgow Housing Association Limited. The Hub works together, to gain a shared understanding and strategy for providing housing options across the area. As part of the HUB, we are fully involved in the Training Toolkit for Housing Options being rolled out this year, which will enhance our current housing options approach. Housing Options appointments/information provides households with advice which explores all possible housing options available, not just council housing or the homelessness route. This includes supporting households to stay within their current home or considering a let with landlords in both the social and private rented sectors. Our Housing options approach may also involve talking to households about their personal circumstances and provide them with support and information about other services, which could help avoid a housing crisis, for example employability, money advice, family mediation or access to mental health services.

Question 3 – anything further that the Scottish Government needs to do to facilitate good practice in this area.

Shared Accommodation provision – any good practice and assistance to look into the feasibility of offering this provision would be appreciated.

Guidance or legislation outlining triggers that prioritise homelessness (i.e. those most vulnerable, not necessarily all cases) and those from a care background in particular as well; would enhance the services put in place across agencies (housing, police, social work & education etc) to ensure a properly co-ordinated and comprehensive package of care and support is put in place. In effect all agencies would need to prioritise such vulnerable cases and guidance would outline the responses and service expected.
Concern for young people, in particular, regarding welfare reforms such as Universal Credit (UC) now fully rolling out and the Bed Tax and the under 35 restriction.

Given the continued roll out of UC, the introduction of Scottish Flexibilities, as soon as possible, to allow housing costs to be paid direct to landlords by claimant choice is urgently requested. This would ensure that landlord, or, Council resources can be directed towards more productive assistance such as increasing skills and confidence building in other aspects of the lives of young people, rather than being diverted to applying for and monitoring UC payments direct, would be greatly appreciated.
PROVISION OF HOUSING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED THE CARE SYSTEM

With reference to your letter of 15th June, inviting local authorities to describe their experience of providing housing for young people leaving the care system, East Lothian Council has for many years been committed to ensuring that looked after young people do not become homeless on leaving care by striving to provide suitable accommodation with support, based on the individual needs of the young person concerned.

We have a joint protocol between Housing and Children’s Services teams, which has been in operation since 2008. Research and local experience tells us there are numerous factors in the successful transition of a young person leaving care, with day-to-day support. Person based support elements are as important as the physical accommodation. A range of holistic support is available and we work with our statutory and voluntary sector partners to ensure that the individual support requirements of these young people are effectively delivered.

Through East Lothian’s Champions Board care experienced young people work with the Housing service and the Corporate Housing Ambassador to help design the services provided for them. For example, we are currently reviewing with the Champions Board the information provided in our tenants handbook and associated documentation, to increase accessibility for young people.

We will outline these accommodation and support arrangements in more detail later in this letter.
We note your comments regarding homelessness and young people who have previously been "care experienced". These comments in relation to an increase in homelessness for this client group need to be placed in context with the overall demand for the homeless service.

A review of our homeless demand over the past 4 years indicates that demand within the homeless system from care experienced young applicants who have been in local authority care within the preceding 5 years before their application, has remained fairly constant at around 7 cases per year, or 1% of homeless demand.

The demand from care experienced people previously looked after, but more than 5 years prior to their application has also stayed constant at around 22 cases per year, approximately 3% of homeless demand. However many of these older applicants can no longer be referred to as young people, and many are now in relationships, part of housing including partners. Therefore, if one looks at this client group where the applicant is 25 or younger the demand is around 9 applicants per year, or just over 1% of demand. The combined demand from care experienced applicants who are 25 years or younger is around 16 applicants per year or approximately 2% of applicants.

East Lothian Council considers that this relatively low level of demand from this client group is an indication of the success of the approach we have taken for many years to accommodate and support young people leaving care.

The often chaotic and difficult circumstances faced by some of these clients raises significant case management issues for our services, but in comparison to other demands such as younger single people homeless as a result of being asked to leave family homes, or 25-45 year olds homeless as a result of relationship breakdowns, the demand from this group is not particularly high.

The Council has recently established a Housing, Health & Social Care Joint Planning group, jointly led by the signatories of this letter, the Head of Development and Head of Children and Adult Services. This group will help ensure there is a co-ordinated approach to strategic planning to identify and meet future housing and support needs. A sub-group of Operational Managers is also working to streamline processes to ensure effective joint working by our staff working on the ground.

With regard to the specific points raised in your letter:

1. **Existing processes and issues**

The system we have established is largely based on a concept of “starter flats”. We instigated this process over a decade ago and it has proved to be very successful with high levels of tenancy sustainment. Our tenancy sustainment figures for starter flats are equivalent to that achieved in other forms of re-housing which are above the national average.
Approximately 80% of the young people leaving care in East Lothian will be allocated a furnished "starter flat" and a leaving care grant provided by Children's Services. These starter flats are identified from Council housing stock as required for the young person as they approach leaving care. During the period leading up to them moving to their starter flat Children's Services will work with the young person to start the process of ensuring that they have the skills and confidence to successfully manage their own tenancy. Having established the young person's preferred location, the Council's Housing Allocations policy has a means of providing a suitable priority to secure an offer of accommodation. That accommodation is generally allocated on the basis of a Scottish Short Secure Tenancy, for a period of up to a year.

Floating support is provided by Children's Services along with any specialised support that may be required. The Rock Trust is also engaged to provide training support to help the young person gain an SQA accredited Tenancy Qualification to help them understand the responsibilities of managing a tenancy, including household budgeting.

When it is established that the tenancy is being successfully maintained, we have within our allocations policy the powers to either transfer the existing tenancy to a full secure tenancy, or to award a further priority to allow the young person to secure alternative accommodation in a different location.

The enormity of leaving care is fully recognised by East Lothian Council, which provides a person centred, and responsive service, which is tailored to the individual and often complex needs of the young people.

The current protocol arrangement outlined above, was established in 2008 and whilst it still provides a useful and effective means of meeting our corporate responsibilities, we are currently reviewing it at present to ensure that it continues to do so.

The needs of some young people leaving care are greater than that which can be met by the "Starter Flat" model. In these cases, Children's Services continue to have responsibility for the provision of suitable accommodation for the young person and they work with colleagues and partner agencies to access suitable supported accommodation. This could be within specific projects managed by specialised support providers or by accessing the supported accommodation provided by the "Homeless Service" for young homeless people.

In addition, we have invested in a service to provide enhanced supported accommodation, which provides greater support than can be provided via the floating support model used for Starter Flats. This project has been successful in providing accommodation for those requiring a greater level of support, and has been positively assisted young people to move on from that accommodation into either a starter flat or individual tenancy.
We have a small number of clients who require an even higher level of support than provided by our enhanced support project. We are presently working with a service provider to identify funding to increase the physical capacity of the existing enhanced support project, and within that to provide appropriate accommodation for these clients. The Council has purchased a suitable property for this purpose and is exploring means of funding with partner agencies including third sector agencies to take this project forward.

2. **Impact of Housing Options**

Our view is that our person centred approach to identifying the best accommodation for young people leaving care is in keeping with the principles of the Housing Options approach and the holistic assessment of someone’s circumstances. However, the reality in East Lothian’s highly pressured housing environment is that for almost all young people leaving the care system, the only practical option is a public sector tenancy.

There are a number of reasons for this, one being that the housing supply across all tenures in East Lothian is heavily biased towards family housing and the supply of one bed roomed sized properties is limited across all tenures.

We have also seen a significant reduction in the opportunity to utilise the private rented sector for homeless clients, and for younger people in particular, following the roll out of the full-digitalised Universal Credit system from March 2016 onwards.

The impact of the shared room rate processes for those under 35 has long been a problem, but we have seen a significant withdrawal from Private landlords from providing accommodation to anyone they see as being in the “benefit” system.

While young people leaving care are not normally in the “benefit” system, private sector landlords can see them as such and as a result any opportunities to utilise their resources are severely limited.

We are exploring flat-sharing as an option for young people leaving care and others and it is hoped that we can facilitate this either by joint investment with service providers, or directly from within the existing private sector.

In the longer term, we consider that the Housing Options approach will benefit these clients in response of any future changes to their circumstances, housing requirements and aspirations.

3. **Scottish Government Support**

There are many areas in which the Scottish Government can provide support to help us further improve our services, the main aspects being:
a. Resources
Whilst the starter flat model can largely be delivered within existing resources, these resources are facing real pressures from competing demands, particularly for one bedroom accommodation in the western part of East Lothian, and the ongoing financial pressures facing all local authorities.

We know that the needs of this particular client group are complex and demanding of specialist support alongside accommodation. Successful transition relies upon access to well-located accommodation and young people engaging in support to maintain their tenancy and develop skills for independence.

The main requirement is for smaller 1-bedroom flats however, this reduces any prospect of financial benefit from the economies of scale that larger units may be able to provide.

We continue to work closely with colleagues in Housing, Regeneration and Welfare to help bring forward the delivery of new affordable homes at pace and scale.

b. Sharing Good Practice
From a housing perspective one of the successes of the HUB approach has been the sharing of examples of good practice/approaches, for examples flat-shares.

It may well be helpful to utilise the HUB process to encourage sharing of ideas and practice in relation to this client group in conjunction with any similar arrangements which exist in the looked after young people sector.

We hope that feedback provided will be beneficial for your requirements. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance.
EAST RENFREWSHIRE

Thank you for letter dated 15th June 2017 regarding the provision of housing for young people who have experienced the care system.

East Renfrewshire Council have had a joint protocol in place between Housing Services and the Health & Social Care Partnership for a number of years. The protocol was designed to set out to ensure that care experienced & vulnerable young people have an integrated and person centred response to meeting their Housing needs.

However East Renfrewshire’s Corporate Parenting Plan 2016 – 2018 recognised that this protocol required to be reviewed. Our Corporate Parenting Plan states that:

All of our looked after young people and care leavers will be encouraged and enabled to remain in a positive care placement until they are ready to move on. Where this is not possible we will develop a range of good quality accommodation and support options which meet their needs.

The review will ensure that the protocol reflects policy and legislative advances around the national housing options protocol guidance, Staying Put, corporate parenting duties and wider responsibilities across the Corporate Parenting Plan regarding the 2014 Act.

The Corporate Parenting Plan is being progressed via the Corporate Parenting Group and a Champions Board which was developed in East Renfrewshire Council with Directors leading on six areas of development.

East Renfrewshire Council has also signed up to the Scottish Care Leaver Covenant to further evidence our commitment to Care Experienced Young People (CEYP).

Within East Renfrewshire CEYP are supported to remain in their current setting until ready to move towards independent living in the community. They are supported by the Youth Intensive Support Service (YISS) who are the lead professional in East
Renfrewshire for all looked-after young people from age 12. YISS through engagement with the CEYP will determine the options available. The Supported Carer campaign, whilst not part of direct accommodation provision, is expected to contribute to expanded options for young people to remain in supportive caring placements before moving towards independent living in a supported transition approach.

There is also additional housing support also available from Housing Services. The service operates an outreach service and a supported accommodation unit that allows young people to learn the skills to live independently before moving onto permanent accommodation of their own.

Should a CEYP wish to be re-housed in social housing, they are a priority group for Housing Services, HSCP and wider Council. The young person will be prioritised for re-housing in areas that meet their needs, (subject to stock availability) that is ensured to be a safe and stable environment. This approach is promoted to all social housing providers who engage with East Renfrewshire Council either under section 5 or nomination agreements.

However it is important to note that the housing options for CEYP within East Renfrewshire are limited. There is a small supply of social & supported housing and in most cases all other tenures are not affordable options. A key area of ongoing work is to design and deliver a range of accommodation options with support packages for young care leavers aged 16 years and over. However there are risks to these and existing housing options as a result of welfare reform changes.

Finally, in order to ensure CEYP are able to secure and maintain independent living the focus has to be wider than just accommodation. Other factors such as educational support, employability outcomes, citizenship, health (physical and mental), emotional wellbeing are vital elements.

I hope you find this feedback useful and please do not hesitate to contact with additional questions.
In response to your letter on the 15th of June we are delighted that you contacted us to hear about our approach and experience of young people leaving care within our area.

We have been working on a number of projects over the years to ensure that we are able to respond to the needs of young people leaving care with the fundamental aim to ensure that they are provided with the best opportunities and experiences when their planned care placements end.

You had asked specifically about our processes for identifying appropriate sustainable housing solutions for leaving care, how our current arrangements are informed by the housing options approach through the ‘Housing Options Protocol for Care Leavers’ and any other considerations that the Scottish Government should consider to facilitate good practice. Our response to this request is detailed below.

Process for identifying appropriate sustainable housing solutions for those leaving care

Our Corporate Parenting Steering Group has been established for some time and ensures that the key priorities, aims and objectives within part 9 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 are implemented as well as taking forward the Housing Option Protocol for care leavers. Therefore our housing options protocol for care leavers commits to providing a range of accommodation and housing support options that will meet the varying and individual needs of care leavers. It is based on the key principles of Housing Options Protocols for Care Leavers (Scottish Government 2013) and Staying Put Scotland (Scottish Government 2013) and outlines the legal and operational framework agreed between Services for providing safe, secure and sustainable accommodation to help care leavers attain, achieve and prosper.

Our protocol aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- Young people leaving care will participate in assessment, planning and decision making about their future housing and housing support needs which will be reflected in their personal housing plan
- Young people leaving care will have access to the housing support they are assessed as needing during their transition to independence in the community,
- Young people leaving care will reside in a safe community environment within good quality accommodation
- Young people will be helped to understand and accept their responsibilities of the community that they live in and consider the potential consequences of their actions
A range of accommodation options are being developed for care leavers which will include

- Specialist accommodation,
- Starter flats,
- Individual tenancies,
- All other options available, for example supported landlady

There is a clear emphasis within the protocol on the roles and responsibilities within the housing service and children’s service and these are clearly outlined within the protocol. For housing the main responsibilities include;

- The provision of good quality housing options advice prior to and after leaving care
- Award maximum priority within the Allocations Policy to all young people gaining independence by leaving care as part of the young persons planning meeting. This will be awarded once the young person and partners have identified they are ready for their own tenancy.
- Ensure Care Leavers are identified on our Integrated Housing Management System in order to ensure all Housing Services staff are aware of their specific vulnerabilities
- Collaborate with other housing partners including Registered Social Landlords to raise their awareness of their corporate parenting responsibilities and to develop a range of appropriate, suitable, good-quality accommodation for care leavers.
- Ensure all parties are aware of the housing options available locally
- Attending the Young Person’s Planning Meeting at least 6 months prior to the planned move, providing support and advice to assist the positive transition.

And joint responsibilities within housing and children’s services are outlined as

- Tenancy sustainment to be a central focus for both housing providers and children’s service, this will include the early identification of problems with tenancies
- Promotion of independent advocacy
- To monitor and evaluate the protocol

At the core of this protocol is the local authority’ responsibility as a corporate parent to ensure that every effort is made to prevent care leavers from becoming homeless. We are confident that the needs, requirements and our responsibilities to care leavers are a key priority and at the heart of our service delivery.
Are our current arrangements informed by housing options

In 2011 we made revisions to our allocations policy to ensure that leaving care applications are given the highest priority within our policy. This means that they can rehoused in the quickest time possible as well as ensuimg that they did not need to go through the homeless route.

Since the launch of the Housing Options Protocols for Care leavers in 2013 we have embedded its core principles within our policies and practice and have developed a joint protocol between our Children’s Service and Housing Services. The core of this protocol commits to encouraging and empowering looked after young people and care leavers to remain in a positive care placement until they are ready to move on whilst maintaining positive supportive relationships with their carers when they leave to ensure that support is available. When the time comes for the young person to move onto independent living, a range of accommodation and supported options are considered that will meet the individual needs of the young person. At the core of this protocol is the local authorities corporate parenting responsibility to ensure that every effort is made to prevent care leavers from becoming homeless. This falls in line with our legal duties under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 – part 9 Corporate Parenting to continue to support and care for care leavers up until their 26th birthday. As detailed above, we have developed a specific protocol and established clear guidelines to ensure that we are able to meet this commitment.

Within our Strategic Objectives and Local Delivery Plan we have committed to ensure our children will develop into resilient, confident and successful adults. This theme is continued within our Corporate Plan and detailed within the Integrated Children’s Services Plan.

Further considerations to facilitate good practice

We recently established a Champions Board which has been tasked with identifying the challenges and issues affected young people leaving care. This group, which includes young people who have experienced care, advocates for care leavers and our service Directors and local Elected Members, is working closely to ensure we are continually improving services and outcomes for young people by listening to their views and taking forward their recommendations.
FIFE COUNCIL

Housing Services are represented on the Corporate Parent Board in Fife and are working with other partners on the board to ensure the opportunities to move into a sustainable housing solution is available to all Young Care Leavers. In recognition that one model does not fit all young people there are a range of temporary solutions available often as preparation for a secure tenancy with the council or one of our partner RSL’S.

“Your processes for identifying appropriate sustainable housing solutions for those leaving care”

Fife operates a Common housing register (FHR) within this the Policy and Procedure Guidance for FHR Partner Organisations includes a “Protocol for dealing with Eligible Care Leavers” (see attached document) This document was completed in 2013 and is currently under review because of changes outlined in the Children and Young Peoples Act and the local issues around finding suitable accommodation that better meets the needs of young people and enables them to be supported to sustain a secure tenancy. Currently YCL in Fife are not considered through Homeless legislation for housing except in very urgent circumstances. However, where there is a need to accommodate them in our temporary accommodation an assessment is completed that enables them to access this, their situation is then case managed through HL1.

“How your current arrangements are informed by a housing options approach as recommended in guidance”

For several years we have had a Housing Professional (Specific Needs) seconded to the Social Work Young Peoples team to facilitate the transition from care facility/supported lodging into more permanent accommodation. The role of this officer is to support the young person to complete applications, offer housing options advice, support them to obtain temporary accommodation when necessary and liaise with local Housing teams to facilitate allocation of suitable properties within their areas of choice. Young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their application and housing situation and liaise where necessary with the local housing teams to monitor the progress of their application.

There are a range of temporary housing solutions available to young people including supported lodgings, third sector partner housing projects which offer supported hostel type accommodation and the allocation of temporary furnished accommodation. All three models enable the YCL to prepare for their future secure tenancy and will hopefully ensure that the young person has the skills necessary to move on and sustain their secure tenancy. Young people move along this pathway at differing speeds and will require very different levels of support. Following allocation of a secure tenancy the young person is encouraged to continue to engage with Housing Support from a partner support provider to further increase the chance of tenancy sustainment.

The aim in Fife is to be able to offer a range of options to YCL that ensure they are supported when needed and in a way that improves their situation. For some this may be shared supported living for others this will be an individual tenancy with support either within the social housing sector or within the private sector.
“Whether there is anything further that the Scottish Government needs to do to facilitate good practise in this area”

As we embark on a review of our processes and protocol for housing Young Care Leavers it would be helpful to learn more from other authorities and specialist organisations. The key to tenancy sustainment particularly for vulnerable groups such as YCL is the ability to offer arrange of services and the appropriate level of support and skills development, as well as the opportunities to continue education or move into employment.

There are several areas that Scottish Government could support good practice and ongoing development in this area of work:

- Sharing good practice - an event or publication organised by Scottish Government as an opportunity to find out how the challenges of housing this client group is managed in other areas

- Funding for more appropriate models, the number of YCL in fife is continuing to increase and the level of need for support and more supported accommodation is rising. More interim opportunities for accommodation along with for example employment or educational opportunities could improve long term tenancy sustainment

- Shared practice around working with challenging and anti-social behaviour...a young person is not going to sustain a tenancy if they continually trash the temp accommodation or the "project" they are living in. We have quite a few who are banned from all the projects and have gone on to do considerable damage to temp accommodation. There is a recognition that banning them from accommodation or evicting from permanent accommodation does not fit with the responsibilities of the Corporate Parent however this cycle of behaviour is difficult to stop.

- Support to engage in further research either in Fife or nationally to gather knowledge regarding the models of housing and support that have had the most success in housing Young Care Leavers.

I trust that the information is satisfactory and useful for your future discussions. If I can be of any further assistance, do not hesitate to contact me.
MIDLOTHIAN

I advise that in Midlothian, Care Leavers or Looked After Children have a single point of contact identified in the Housing Service’s Youth Homelessness Team, who provides housing options advice in accordance with the national guidance.

In the specific provision we can ensure this client group do not have to access services through the mainstream Homelessness service. The direct liaison with our Children’s Services results in appropriate housing solutions being identified and person centred rather than resorting to emergency homelessness situations. The Council’s Housing Services lease 6 properties for this client group provision and there is also a nomination arrangement with Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association.

While additional budget has been provided by the Council for homeless households, you will be aware of the funding shortfall created due to Welfare Reform particularly for young people; the pressure on council provided temporary accommodation; the impact of Universal Credit Full Service implemented in Midlothian and the planned rent cap for social rented housing will cause as a significant pressure on homelessness budgets in general.

There has been a stable position in homelessness in Midlothian attributed to the Housing Options solutions provided, but I suggest there is also a need to look at dedicated capital funding for new additional temporary provision as we need a more durable long term funding package for temporary accommodation and associated support services and a more focused strategy to deal with a growing homelessness problem driven in part by a shortage of affordable accommodation and increasing problems in accessing other tenures, otherwise the Scottish Government’s proposals for 50,000 new affordable houses over five years doesn’t now look like it’s going to be enough.

The Youth Homelessness Team have also developed and provide a SQA Pre-Tenancy Award for life skills and tenancy sustainment outcomes and this option will shortly be extended for delivery into the Council’s residential units.

I trust this information is helpful to demonstrate our shared commitment and I have attached for your information Midlothian Council’s Corporate Parent Strategy which outlines key actions for Housing and Homelessness Services.
Q1. Process for identifying appropriate sustainable housing solutions for those leaving care.

North Ayrshire's Housing Services and the Heath & Social Care Partnership Throughcare team have a care leaver protocol, the purpose of which is to identify and provide appropriate housing and support for a young person on leaving care.

A Pathway Assessment is undertaken prior to a young person leaving care at which point the housing and support needs are identified and agreed between the two services.

The young person moves into an interim furnished tenancy where a comprehensive assessment of independent living skills is undertaken. When it is determined that the young person has the necessary skills to sustain a tenancy they will either be allocated their interim accommodation as a permanent tenancy or an alternative Scottish Secure Tenancy will be identified within the young person's area of choice, ensuring access to support and social networks.

It is important to recognise that young people leaving care are given priority on the North Ayrshire Common Housing Register, waiting list, giving rapid access to appropriate housing at the point were they are determined as ready for independent living.

The above process is effective in maximising tenancy sustainment, with 80% of young people sustaining their permanent accommodation for more than a year.

2. How your current arrangements are informed by a housing options approach as recommended in guidance.

The North Ayrshire Throughcare protocol precedes the Housing Options Guidance, however it meets the requirements and delivers the outcomes as recommended by the guidance.

The protocol ensures that a comprehensive assessment of a young persons' needs and aspirations is undertaken and the most appropriate, affordable sustainable permanent outcome is identified, with on going support provision as required.

3. Whether there is anything further the Scottish Government needs to do to facilitate good practice in this area

A national review and of the models of interim /transitional accommodation for care leavers would be of benefit in order to determine best practice.
It may also be worthwhile considering a national survey of young people (both in care and those who have left care) in order to gather views of what the needs, concerns and future models of provision and support should look like in order to reduce risk and minimise anxiety for young people throughout the transition into permanent housing.

I trust this information is helpful in informing your future review work.

NORTH LANARKSHIRE

I refer to your letter of 15 June 2017 outlining your recent discussions with Ministers and your particular interest in understanding better how local authorities are implementing the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 to achieve the best outcomes for children and young people.

The council takes its responsibilities as corporate parents extremely seriously and put the needs of children and young people at the heart of our services, particularly when they have experience of the care system.

Our Care Leavers Protocol has been updated to promote the housing options approach ensuring that young people in care are at the centre of their pathway plan; and that they are supported to understand what housing options are available to them and to make a decision that is right for them. Planning for young people leaving care starts when they are 15 years old as part of the child’s plan and progresses to the throughcare pathway plan where the development needs of the young person are identified and plans are put in place to begin the transition to adult life. This includes early discussions on continuing care and housing options.

Regular reviews of the plan are ongoing and a welfare assessment is incorporated into the plan when the young person reaches the age of 16 years and involves all corporate parenting partners. The welfare assessment reflects the impact on the health and wellbeing of any housing options being considered by the young person, including continuing care, and sits alongside the pathway plan and continues to be part of the ongoing planning processes.
An aftercare plan is developed when a young person is considering leaving care and more in depth discussions are held with housing staff. The intention of these meetings is to help the young person to understand all housing options available to them, the processes that need to take place within each option and the support that is available to help them achieve a successful transition to independent living. The focus of the aftercare plan is firmly about the health and wellbeing needs of the young person and the achievement of their aims and sustainable outcomes.

In North Lanarkshire aftercare supports sit with the services that have supported young people through their time as looked after children. This assists a smooth transition from looked after status to aftercare supports. In practice the same locality based social workers who have worked with young people as looked after children provide the assessment and planning for their aftercare support. In addition residential children’s houses continue to support young people who have left their care in addition to supporting those who have chosen to remain in continuing care. For those in highest need an intensive service is provided through our Community Alternatives service which can support young people up to age 26.

Some form of supported accommodation may be the first step some young people leaving care wish to take and this can include Supported Carers who are recruited and supported by Social Work. For others, a home of their own may be their goal, either through the local authority or a housing association or in the private sector. Shared tenancies, supported by the Council, are not yet available in North Lanarkshire; however, this is an option currently being developed with the aim of extending the housing options available to young people who are particularly affected by welfare reforms.

The Housing Service has developed a range of advice and support services to assist all young people, including care leavers, to achieve their goals including:

- In-house Housing Advisors to provide information and advice on a wide range of housing options as well as housing support services;
- Positive Destinations which is a relatively new service exclusively for care experienced young people age 15-20 years. The overall aim is to assist young people through the transitional stages of growing up, such as leaving school, leaving home, entering adult health services and moving forward onto positive life destinations.
- Commissioned housing support services, including services delivered by Bernardo’s and Blue Triangle H.A. which are specifically targeted at young people;
- Respite Flat facility, specifically for young people in care who are in crisis to provide an opportunity to take time away, try and resolve the issue and return to previous living arrangement;
- Training Flat opportunity for young people still in care to assist in developing independent living skills and supported by a modular learning programme;
- Access to Keys to Learn programme at new College Lanarkshire which aims to assist young people in learning the skills they need to move forward in life and includes information on housing options;
- Sustainability Officers to intervene and work with young people, including care leavers, to address financial issues where possible and prevent homelessness;
- Youth Champions across localities to actively intervene and support young people where there are specific barriers they are struggling to overcome;
- Mediation Services;
- Independent Advice from a housing funded service delivered by CAB.
Youth Homelessness, particularly those who have experienced the care system, are a key priority for the Housing Service in Perth & Kinross Council. Within our Housing Options and Support Team we deliver a person centred service to all young people. Below are some of the processes and current arrangements that are in place to ensure sustainable and appropriate housing solutions are offered to those young people leaving care:

- **Housing Allocations**
  Within our Common Allocation Policy we operate a Strategic Housing Need group. This group is for people that have an urgent or exceptional housing need and young people leaving the care system are included within this group. Prioritising care leavers within this group ensures that the risk of homelessness is reduced or avoided and that their housing needs and their aspirations can be planned appropriately.

- **Youth Prevention Protocol / Multi-agency Approach**
  The Housing Service also operates a youth prevention protocol. The aim of this Protocol is to ensure a co-ordinated and multi-agency response to the accommodation needs of care leavers and young homeless people. It outlines the legal and operational frameworks for providing assessment, planning and appropriate accommodation. It also provides for care leavers who have found themselves unexpectedly homeless or in significant housing difficulty.

- **Dedicated Education / Support Officers**
  Within the Housing Options & Support Team there are two dedicated Housing Education / Support Workers that deliver housing education to all secondary schools in Perth and other youth settings. They also support young people who have housing difficulties by providing advice and assistance to ensure appropriate accommodation is identified or liaise with parents, landlords to enable the young person to return home, if safe to do so. They will also support the young person to sustain their tenancy by providing tailored and targeted support.
• Early Intervention and Prevention Approach
The Housing Options & Support Team works closely with Education & Children Services to support all young people leaving care by helping to identify and source accommodation as part of their Pathway Plan. Intervening early provides the team with realistic timescales to source appropriate accommodation to meet the needs of the young person which is essential for tenancy sustainment, making the young person feel safe, secure and maintaining social networks.

• Offering A Range of housing options
As the Housing Options & Support Team manages access to social housing, through the Common Housing Register, and has good links with private landlords through their various initiatives such as the Rent Bond Guarantee Scheme and Empty Homes – the team is able to explore a range of housing options for young people. These options could include, starter flats, flat shares, furnished accommodation etc. Exploring various options for the young person based on their housing needs and aspirations enables the right type, size and location of housing to be identified which increases the likelihood of the tenancy being sustained and positives outcomes being achieved by the young person.

• Support and Assistance – once in accommodation
Identifying and securing appropriate accommodation for young people leaving care is only the beginning of the process. Once appropriate accommodation has been identified, a Support Officer will work alongside the Housing Officer to ensure the young person settles positively into their new home. The Housing Officer will visit the young person to offer advice and assistance regarding their tenancy such as how to be a good neighbour, advice on how to look after their tenancy and highlighting the importance of paying their rent and bills. The Support Officer also works closely with the Housing Officer to ensure support is provided and any issues or concerns are quickly addressed.

• Monitoring and Quality Assurance Arrangements
To monitor the effectiveness of the various arrangements that the Housing Service has in place for young people leaving care and young people presenting as homeless, teams within the Service have a performance management framework which records housing outcomes for young people. These frameworks are monitored on a monthly basis by the relevant teams and any trends or issues are highlighted and addressed through improvement action plans. The teams also carry out quality assurance audits and checks on cases to ensure that agreed arrangements are being met and to also identify any staff training issues or further areas of improvement.
- **Staff Training and Awareness**
  To ensure that the housing needs of young people leaving care are met effectively, housing staff are provided with training and awareness on relevant legislation, codes of practice and guidance. Staff training needs and requirements also feature as a standing item agenda at supervision sessions and annual appraisals.

Actions that the Scottish Government could do to facilitate good practice in this area are:

- Provide more support to the Housing Options hubs to help share good practice between the hubs.
- In practice, the delivery of housing options is working well but as practice is not enshrined in legislation this has created real tension and confusion between the operation of housing options and our duties under homeless legislation. The main reason for this tension is due to current legislation focusing on a “process” drive system rather than achieving the best outcome for the person in housing need. To help address this conflict and support local authorities to achieve the best outcome for young people leaving care, a single consistent legal framework is required.
In our role as Corporate Parents, Renfrewshire Council has several Partnership Agreements in place to ensure that services and staff are not only aware of care experienced young people, but have an understanding of their often complex needs.

Our response to the specific points you have requested comments on has been compiled in conjunction with Social Work colleagues:

1. Processes for identifying appropriate sustainable housing solutions for those leaving care

In Renfrewshire, preparing and planning for care experienced young people to manage their own tenancies begins well in advance of any allocation of social housing.

This is particularly evident in the joint working and the sharing of information between our Social Work 'Throughcare' Service and our Homeless Prevention Team, which is helping to ensure that:

- appropriate accommodation is offered,
- more tenancies tend to start well,
- there are supports in place to assist the young person to subsequently manage their tenancy.

Renfrewshire Council’s Throughcare service opened Charleston Square in 2013, which offers 24 hour supported accommodation at 10 flats. Since this resource has been in place, there has been a decrease in the number of young people presenting as homeless directly from 'Throughcare'.

Key to this has been a protocol agreed between Housing Services and the Throughcare service at the time of Charleston House opening. Now all young people who are deemed to be reaching the point of being ready for independent living are offered 1-2-1 housing options advice, as well as participation in our 'Home 4 Keeps' programme. This provides 1-2-1 tenancy training tailored to the specific needs of the young person before they move into their new home, and practical support and assistance to help them when they get their keys - this was previously offered on a group-work basis, but has an improved take-up level now that it has been moved to a 1-2-1 arrangement.

A further measure that has improved matters as regards sustainable housing solutions is the use of up to 10 Council-owned flats at any one time as 'satellite' accommodation. These properties are furnished, and staff from the Throughcare service provide outreach support, advice and assistance.
In response to lower tenancy sustainment levels in 2015/16, we now offer 1-2-1 assistance to all homeless applicants under the age of 25 - including those leaving care or who are care-experienced - when they become new tenants, with a focus on such matters as dealing with utilities, applying for housing benefit, and acquiring furnishings.

The 2016/17 year end position in relation to the indicator for care leavers under 19 years of age living in sustainable accommodation for 6 months or longer has increased from 53% at year end in 2015/16 to 73%, and Council tenancies sustained for more than 12 months by homeless applicants increased from 72% to 78% in the same time period.

2. How your current arrangements are informed by a housing options approach as recommended in guidance

A housing options approach is now well embedded within our arrangements for dealing with all applications for housing, as evidenced in our response to the first point.

We believe this has contributed to the reduction in homeless applications, including those from young people leaving care.

The two regularly referenced problems of non-engagement by some housing applicants, and a general lack of one bedroom accommodation does however present problems in finding solutions quickly for those in housing need despite this well established adoption of the housing options approach.

3. Whether there is anything further that the Scottish Government needs to do to facilitate good practice in this area

We were the first Scottish local authority to fund a 'Housing First' service, which we commission from Turning Point Scotland.

An independent evaluation of our Housing First service in 2015 found that it was having significant success in stabilising the lives of those who previously had a number of recorded homeless applications, including a number who were care experienced, and we have recently commissioned Homeless Action Scotland to carry out a cost/benefit analysis of this project.

Whilst the intensive support and peer-working associated with a Housing First approach tends to work best with older homeless applicants, a similar approach that is tailored towards the needs of those leaving care may be required to be scoped out.

Along with loneliness, affordability is a regularly a factor in tenancies not being sustained, and we are aware that in England there is parliamentary support for council tax exemption for care leavers until the age of 25. Any measures such as this that could reduce housing costs may contribute to further improving the housing outcomes for those leaving care.
SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

Thank you for your letter of 15 June about the provision of housing for young people who have experienced the care system.

Scottish Borders Council is committed to working closely with a range of partners including NHS Borders, Borders College, and Police Scotland, to achieve the best possible outcomes for Looked After Children. The Scottish Borders Corporate Parenting Strategy 2014-2018, which was developed by Councilors, Health Board Directors, Local Authority Chief Officers and, most importantly, young people, is a living document that describes how we are seeking to meet that commitment.

A key objective of the Corporate Parenting Strategy is to “improve outcomes for all Looked After Children by enhancing the range and flexibility of effective services”. This includes:

- Developing the understanding of the ‘Staying Put Scotland’ guidance and implementing the recommendations within this report.
- Considering, with Homelessness and housing Services, the implications of the Scottish Government’s ‘Housing Options Protocols for Care leavers’ guidance.
- Preparing for the implementation of new duties and responsibilities in respect of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act.

Correspondingly, the current Corporate Parenting Action Plan seeks to “(improve) access to, and range of accommodation available to Care Leavers and care experienced young people” by “(establishing) a protocol to ensure Care Leavers are not categorised as Homeless when applying for a tenancy”. A ‘Housing Options Protocol for Care Leavers in the Scottish Borders’ between Scottish Borders Council and 3 of the locally based Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) Berwickshire Housing Association, Eildon Housing Association and Waverley Housing has been operational from 1 April 2017. The Protocol is intended to ensure that the priority accommodation and support needs of care leavers are recognised in order that care leavers have their needs for suitable housing met in a planned and sustainable way and that care leavers do not need to enter the homelessness system at all in order to access housing. We have now received confirmation that Scottish Borders Housing Association’s (SBHA) Board have endorsed the protocol.

The Corporate Parenting Action Plan also seeks to “set up satellite accommodation for young people currently resident in Wheatland YPU who require support when moving on to independent living” as part of the commitment to improving access to, and the range of accommodation available
to Care Leavers. Council Social Work and Housing officers are working together to establish suitable accommodation, supported by residential staff.

An outcome specified in the Corporate Parenting Strategy Action Plan is to "(increase) access to employment, training and vocational opportunities for young people who have previously been Locked After." An example of this is the Scottish Borders 'Keys to Employment' project which is a 10 week course to help people learn new skills, manage their home and prepare for employment. In addition, the Council is currently seeking funding for a 'Borders Positive Pathways Pilot (BPPP) which seeks to secure completion of an integrated supported pathway to sustainable employment in the care or the construction sector for 30 single young people before the introduction of the Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) cap across social housing tenancies in April 2019. Young people that have been through the care system will make up a proportion of the group selected for the pilot should we achieve the funding outcome we bid for.

The Council’s Throughcare Aftercare Team (TCAC) was developed as a result of the implementation of an Integrated Children’s Service and with the partnership of Scottish Borders Housing Association. The multi-agency team provides a range of support to previously Locked After young people in their transition to independent living across Scottish Borders. It includes specialist throughcare staff, social workers, employability worker and housing support worker.

The Albert Place supported accommodation project offers 4 supported tenancies in Galashiels and is jointly managed by TCAC and SBHA. The development of this project involved direct input from young people with experience of the care system.

The Scottish Borders Local Housing Strategy (LHS) has been reviewed and we expect the new LHS 2017-2022 to be endorsed by Members on the 5th September following which it will be submitted to Scottish Government. The research conducted in 2016 to inform development of the new LHS found that Scottish Borders has a relatively high level of youth homelessness (with 14 per 1000 persons aged 16-24 experiencing homelessness compared to 12.6 per 1000 in Scotland) and analysis of the homeless population in the Scottish Borders by age and household type suggested that 38% of applicants are single people under 35. LHS stakeholder consultation produced a clear outcome that preventing and alleviating homelessness remains a key priority and that, aligned to improving access to accommodation, is the need for proactive and person-centred Housing Options advice services.

A key element of our new LHS will be the formation of a new Homelessness and Wellbeing Strategic Partnership. Membership of the new Partnership will include officers from the Council’s Throughcare Aftercare Team (TCAC), the locally based RSLs, and NHS Borders. This will strengthen the strategic partnership approach to the provision of housing for young people who have experienced the care system.

The Council is considering undertaking a Young People’s Housing and Accommodation Needs Study which will provide an enhanced strategic context which will further inform the ongoing development and implementation of the LHS and of the Council’s Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP).
SHETLAND

I think our multi-agency Care Leavers Protocol covers the first two questions raised. We use a joined-up approach with relevant agencies to identifying sustainable solutions for those leaving care and have built the housing options approach into the protocol to help us to achieve that and to achieve our corporate parenting outcomes.

In relation to anything further that the Scottish Government could do to facilitate good practice, I wonder if there is perhaps a need to strengthen the role of housing support/multi-agency support in the process. I am thinking of the statutory obligation in relation to assessment for housing support needs as part of a homeless presentation and if mirroring that provision would assist in focusing on housing sustainability for care leavers?

SOUTH LANARKSHIRE

In South Lanarkshire, we are acutely aware of the issues faced by care experienced young people, including finding sustainable housing solutions. Housing Services work very closely at both a strategic and operational level with a range of partners to try and improve outcomes for young people leaving care. We are fully involved in the Corporate Parenting governance arrangements and contribute fully to the development of the local Corporate Parenting Strategy. Our commitment to Corporate Parenting is explicit in our Local Housing Strategy.

This response sets out the context within which South Lanarkshire Housing Services manage our Corporate Parenting responsibilities to young people; then summarises the information in answer to the 3 specific questions.

South Lanarkshire Council has had a partnership working arrangement in place between Social Work and Housing Services since 2008, which was reviewed in 2012 to reflect GIRFEC principles.

A number of examples from our partnership agreement document are featured in the 2013 Housing Options Protocol Guidance for Corporate Parents. The partnership agreement sets out the principles of how Housing and Social Work Services work together with the young person to support her or him to transition from care successfully. Its key points are:

- That there are many factors in the life of a young person that will influence accommodation choices and we need to support the young person to consider these carefully.
● That Social Work staff should start their conversation with Housing staff before the Pathways Planning process begins, in order to ensure that they understand the housing options available in relation to what the young person may want or need. That we will encourage young people to submit a housing application as soon as possible after their 16th birthday so that they can be on the Housing List from that date, however, we would almost always defer the application until such time they are ready to be considered for housing.

● That we will consider care leavers outwith the normal Waiting List to ensure we have flexibility to seek good quality housing offers that met their needs.
● That some young people in care have very complex needs and need a tailored planning process to be in place from an early stage in order to support a successful move on from care.

Since 2012, and particularly with the launch of the Housing Options and Staying Put Protocol Guidance in 2013 and the 2014 Children and Young People (Scotland) Act, South Lanarkshire’s Housing Services have worked with partners, and in consultation with care experienced young people themselves, to develop our approach to supporting care experienced young people to access suitable accommodation and appropriate supports. Actions include:-

1. Identifying key officers who lead on working with care leavers in every housing office, including a manager.
2. Ensuring oversight of the joint planning process using a 2 tier system:-
   ● operationally, Social Work and Housing Officers work with individual care leavers to plan their accommodation and support as required
   ● Social Work and Housing team leaders/managers in each geographical location meet every 2-3 months to review shared caseloads and ensure that each child has a plan for moving on.
3. Establishment of a quarterly meeting for lead Housing Officers in 2013, chaired by the Head of Housing Services, to ensure shared approach and understanding in our work with care experienced young people. This group has now become an 8 weekly Corporate Parenting (CP) steering group for lead housing staff chaired by the Homelessness and Housing Support Manager.
4. In 2013, the CP lead officer group discussed the Housing Options and Staying Put Guidance at length. We also met with some care experienced young people to discuss their experience of housing and how we might improve our approach.
5. All lead housing and Social Work staff were trained on a housing options approach to housing for care leavers in 2014 (with a focus on encouraging young people to stay in care as long as possible where this is appropriate, and on the use of phased transitions). Similar training has been rolled out to Social Work’s Family Placement team and was delivered at 2 events for foster and supported carers in 2014.
6. A review of all Housing Services procedures – adding a statement of principle on Corporate Parenting in all procedures and making relevant amendments to specific procedures to ensure we can meet the commitments set out in our statement of principle.
7. Arranging for Who Cares? Scotland to train all Housing Services staff in CP duties, with a more detailed workshop session delivered to lead housing officers and managers.
8. Working with Social Work Services to design a Tenancy Preparation course, delivered by third sector providers to any young person aged around 16 or above who is thinking about moving on from care.

9. Leasing ‘Training/Taster flats’ to SW services for the use of young people as part of their preparation process for moving on from care – they can use the flats for short periods or stay for up to 2 weeks to try out independent living before they leave care – this has had a significant impact on young people’s choices, with more young people choosing to stay in their care placement for longer as a result of staying in the training/taster flat.

10. Allocating lead Housing Officers to act as a link with children’s houses. We know that talking about housing to young people too early can make them anxious that there is pressure on them to leave, so we have tried to demystify ‘housing’ by having a friendly housing officer dropping in and out of children’s houses for coffee and a chat – so that it’s easier for young people to ask questions & they can talk to someone they’re comfortable with when the time comes. We are keen to promote the principle that young people have a relationship with housing in their own right, not just through their Social Worker.

11. We are conscious that it’s harder to provide that contact & housing information for children in foster care placements, so in February 2017 Housing Services and the Family Placement Team held a very successful evening event with foster carers and the children and young people they look after and agreed a system that the Family Placement Team provide Housing staff with the contact details for foster carers who look after young people who are turning 15. Lead Housing Officers then write to the carers, offering an informal meeting (with young person too, if they want to) to discuss what kind of housing options may be available for their young people when they want to begin thinking about housing.

12. Housing Services have participated in a review of all planning processes for young people leaving care, with a view to streamlining our approach across services and developing one partnership working protocol, based on a holistic approach to supporting young people to plan for their future in terms of housing, employment/education, lifestyle choices etc. We expect our 2012 Housing/SW partnership agreement to become part of this broader protocol agreement.

For those young people whose preferred housing option is within social rented housing, we are confident that our housing offers to young people who are ready to leave are suitable & the tenancy sustainment rate for care experienced young people in 2016/17 was 86% (who had sustained their tenancy for at least 12 months). However, some young people leave care before they are ready to live independently, and there are limited options available, including living in temporary or supported accommodation designed for homeless people.

We are working with Social Work Colleagues to address this issue by developing more appropriate accommodation and support options for young people who require continuing care – in the expectation that when they move on, they are more likely to be ready to live independently.
Response to Minister’s Questions:-

1. Our processes for identifying appropriate, sustainable solutions for young people leaving care:-
   (i) Early informal contact with Housing Services for care experienced young people and their carers so that housing is less frightening and young people can think about it informally at an early stage – with accurate information on their housing options.
   (ii) Designated lead Housing Officers in all our local offices who lead on housing issues for care experienced young people: who act as first 1st point of contact and make proactive links with children’s houses and foster carers. These officers are trained to use a housing options approach in their work with young people.
   (iii) Our principle that planning starts for all care experienced young people at 15 years – even if the plan is to stay where they are until they’re 21, ensuring that at the right time, they have the opportunity to discuss their options, that they’re being prepared for independent living.
   (iv) All our Housing Services procedures have been amended to set out how we will meet our Corporate Parenting responsibilities.
   (v) We are working with our CP partners to improve our partnership approach to future planning for care experienced young people.

2. How our current arrangements are informed by a Housing Options approach, as recommended in guidance:-
   We have trained Housing Officers to use a housing options approach in housing planning for care experienced young people, including:-
   (i) Getting to know the young person to make discussion as comfortable as possible to considering and discussing the holistic needs, aspirations and circumstances of the individual young person with them and their carers/social workers.
   (ii) Looking at the range of housing options that might be available for the young person and understanding the pros and cons of those options.
   (iii) Identifying what needs to be done to prepare a young person for transition and to manage a tenancy of their own and how this will be progressed.
   (iv) Ensuring this includes an understanding of rights and responsibilities and how HousingServices will meet our CP duty.
   (v) Agreeing a plan based on best options – acknowledging that this may change over time and will need to be reviewed.

3. Whether there is anything further that the Scottish Government needs to do to facilitate good practice in this area.
   Some areas that might be worth exploring are: -
   (i) Updating HL1 to include information about all young people under 26 who were looked after in any way on their 16th birthday (not just those who were looked after and accommodated).
   (ii) Recognising and encouraging discussion about the difficulties in supporting care experienced young people with the most challenging circumstances and who struggle to work with services, into independent living.
   I hope that this information is useful to you and will help to inform the approaches to this issue and also the workplan of the Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like further information.
WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE

West Dunbartonshire Council takes our role as corporate parents. We therefore welcome the opportunity to contribute to the wider work being taken by the Scottish Government to identify how housing solutions identified by the throughcare and aftercare process can help to provide more sustainable outcomes for our young people.

We place the health, welfare and development of children and young people at the centre of the planning and delivery of services and we can evidence a strong record of partnership working in terms of securing positive housing outcomes for our young care leavers. We have a “Leaving Care Protocol” in place between Housing and the Health and Social Care Partnership which we are in the process of reviewing.

For all of our young people leaving care, West Dunbartonshire Council is a corporate parent and seeks to establish positive relationships with other agencies and partners who can play a key role in assisting with improving outcomes for our looked after children and young people. As a good corporate parent, the Council aims to ensure that these young people have as good a chance as any other young person of making a success of their lives.

The Council has signed up to the Care Leavers Covenant which,

“supports Scotland’s corporate parents in fulfilling their duties to improve the life chances of all of Scotland’s care leavers”.

We recognise that care leavers are particularly vulnerable when making the transition to adulthood and are nationally over-represented in statistics relating to homelessness.

We are currently in the process of reviewing our existing protocol that is in place, which will recognise the Council’s view that in no circumstances should young people leave the care of the local authority without alternative accommodation appropriate to the assessed need of the young person being in place.

The Council’s plan is to offer an integrated and co-ordinated service that aims to ensure that no care leaver will become homeless on leaving care or lack support to achieve independence and stability within the community.

The protocol will promote the principle that care leavers will be provided with the securest form of tenancy available to them and will not routinely be provided with homeless accommodation; unless using the homeless process allows them priority access to housing.

As part of this approach, a review of our Housing Allocations Policy plans to introduce Young Care Leavers as a reasonable preference group (our new Allocations Policy is due to be presented to the November 2017 meeting of our Housing and Communities Committee for approval).

Process for identifying appropriate sustainable housing solutions
Our updated protocol has the following aims and outcomes:

**Aims;**
- No young person should have to become homeless on leaving care,
- A range of accommodation and support solutions will be made available to young care leavers on their move from care into interdependence and until their 22nd birthday if involved with the Throughcare Team,
- The above provision will be based on the best interests of the young person, taking their views into account,
- The long term sustainability of suitable housing is the goal,
- This agreement reflects the aim of each party to strengthen existing services and joint working arrangements detailing the duties and responsibilities of each department as corporate parents,
- All parties are committed to working together to improve outcomes for young people who have been looked after and accommodated,
- Housing will ensure the provision of appropriate advice and assistance to young people leaving care in order to prevent homelessness and ensure transition to suitable accommodation,
- Every corporate parent should consider their contribution towards providing safe, secure, stable and nurturing homes for looked after children and care leavers. Part 10 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act increases the upper age which care leavers can request and receive ongoing advice, guidance and assistance from their 21st to 26th birthday.

**Outcomes - all services will ensure that a care leaver receives;**
- A consistent service,
- A completed Pathway Plan and the care leaver’s accommodation views identified,
- Access to accommodation which considers the young person’s needs, skills, ability and choice,
- Access to an appeals and resolution service which is described and understood by them,
- Direct access to a housing route via the Young Care Leavers Reasonable Preference Group,
- Appropriate support during their transition to independence in the community.

All young people who are looked after and accommodated by the Council will have a Pathway Plan of their future support and accommodation needs before they leave care. This is a young person centred activity that will enable their ambitions and support needs to be outlined and understood. The Pathway planning has three components: views, assessment and plan. The assessment is informed by the views of the young person.
- The assessment cannot be completed before a young person reaches school-leaving age;
- The Pathway Plan must be completed within 3 weeks of the assessment; and
- The Pathway Plan must be completed prior to the young person leaving care.

Only in exceptional circumstances should young people be moved on from care without a Pathway Plan or against the recommendation of the plan.
How current arrangements are informed by a housing options approach

Officers from the HSCP will be responsible for convening a planning meeting, ensuring that relevant people who the young person wishes to be present are notified. This meeting should be convened at the earliest stage possible, ideally through the LAAC review process.

An applicant’s accommodation and support needs will be identified as part of the Pathway Planning process and in partnership with others, providing a detailed assessment of the young person’s needs in both the short and long term. Accommodation and support options for the young person will be solely determined by the accommodation and support needs assessment as identified at the planning meeting. The assessment will include consideration of:

- The level of competency and skill of the young person to move towards independent living;
- The level of preparation and support that will be required;
- Most suitable accommodation option; and
- The time scales for moving on.

Whilst the protocol promote the principle that care leavers will be provided with the securest form of tenancy available to them and will not routinely be provided with homeless accommodation, a range of housing options will be assessed in the planning process.

What further Scottish Government could do to facilitate good practice?
The Scottish Government could bring in a ruling which would see Young Care Leavers exempt from Council Tax. This would be a very positive action to take and would be another way of assisting Young Care Leaver’s sustain their tenancies. The measure has been mentioned before and there are examples from local authorities in England.

We are looking forward to delivering the best possible housing outcomes for our children and young people and I trust that the above will be of assistance to you.
WEST LOTHIAN

Thank you for your letter of 15th June 2017 requesting comments on the provision of Housing for Young people who have experienced the care system.

West Lothian Council’s aim is to prevent homelessness from occurring in the first place, when it does happen the council will work and support people through their journey and to achieve positive sustainable outcomes.

The Council has adopted a person centred and preventative Housing Options approach in tackling homelessness, looking at an individual’s options and choices in the widest sense.

In West Lothian there is consistent trend in homeless presentations from the 16-24 year age group with 34% presentations in 2016-17 which can include those leaving the care system or who have been previously looked after.

Reducing the number of care experienced young people in West Lothian who experience homelessness is therefore a key corporate priority for the Council.

The Council through its housing options approach and partnership working has a range of processes and early intervention planning approaches in place for identifying appropriate sustainable housing solutions for those leaving care, previous looked after or at risk of homelessness.

A Multi Agency Planning Group exists (15+Resource Group) which consists of Social Policy, Children and Families and Throughcare services, Education, Housing and Voluntary Sector. The groups main primary focus is to consider the needs of looked after young people however it also has the remit to consider other young people who maybe vulnerable and are identified as being at risk of homelessness. In consultation and agreement with the young person the group will plan and coordinate all aspects.
of young person’s housing and support needs to enable a smooth transition to independent living. Part of this planning process will involve full consideration to the most appropriate form of accommodation suitable for the young person.

Considered accommodation options for young people leaving care or identified at risk include:

- Option to remain in residential care
- Option to move to a move on training flat
- Continued stay in foster care with appropriate support
- Return home with support provided
- Supported Adult placement
- Move on supported accommodation including shared flats in partnership between the Council and the third sector
- Transitional tenancy approach

Where a young person disengages from support and seeks assistance at a later stage all attempts will be made to re-engage the young person with appropriate services in the first instance whilst exploring all housing options which includes explaining the persons homeless right and identifying any support needs. It is recognised that whilst there are housing options available that may prevent homelessness, access to these options for young people can be limited as a result of welfare reform issues.

Moving forward West Lothian Council has identified homelessness as a key corporate priority and continues to seek to improve its approaches in prevention of homelessness for all groups. Specifically through the Corporate Parenting Report and Plan 2017-18, the Council aims to reduce homelessness for those care experienced young people focusing on “Providing high quality through, continuing and aftercare”.

Homeless Services is committed to working jointly with its corporate partners and are currently reviewing our services we deliver to all young people threatened with homelessness to promote sustainable outcomes for young people and positive destinations through provision of positive support services for housing, employment and training.

The impact of welfare reform changes and the full role out of Universal Credit is expected to have an impact on this age group. West Lothian acknowledges that the Scottish Government has been working to find a way to effectively mitigate the impending pressures and as such there are exemptions and interim measures to minimise impact. However we hope that the Scottish Government can find a way to work with the UK Government to identify a suitable permanent solution that will inevitably not impact on homelessness.

Scottish Government

9 November 2017