



Suffolk  
Safeguarding  
Partnership

## Joint Protocol 2022 – 2024



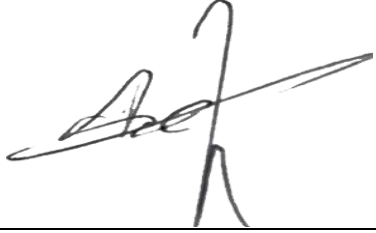


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Joint working arrangements – ensuring we meet the needs of homeless 16 /17year olds

September 2022



## Agreed and signed by:

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## Policy Version History

Version	Date of SSP (formerly LSCB) Endorsement	Date Review of	Document Author
V1	May 2016	May 2019	Julia Vernon -YPHAG
V2	April 2019	May 2021	Tracey Curtis, Strategic Commissioning Lead for Corporate Parenting, Suffolk County Council and District & Borough Councils Representatives
V3	April 2019	May 2021	Appendices added
V4	September 2022		YPHAG

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## 1. Introduction

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- 1.1 This joint protocol forms an agreement between Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Borough and District Councils.
- 1.2 The ambition is to ensure legislation, caselaw and guidance is applied consistently across our county, improving the experience, choice and accommodation our young people presently receive, thus preventing homelessness.
- 1.3 Collectively we consider that young people are best placed living with their families or within the existing family network, as long as it is safe for them to do so. We will make every effort to support this and commit to continually explore reunification.

## 2. Principles

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- To safeguard and promote the wellbeing of our young people.
- To prevent homelessness.
- To eliminate unsuitable accommodation for our young people and adopt a partnership approach to accommodation where resources are full.
- To keep a young person's voice at the centre of practice. The wishes and views of the young person are to be taken into consideration and will be fully evident throughout the process.
- To consider individual circumstances in a holistic way, including pregnancy, and relationships, as a household.
- To embrace collaborative working relationships between partners and agencies with a focus on aligning procedures to make services easy to access by young people and families.
- To establish a consistent pathway – the flowchart has been agreed to facilitate this.
- Partner agencies to recognise and promote opportunities for young people (aged 16 or 17) to live with their families and get support from them if safe to do so. There is a joint commitment in investing in resources that enhance stronger family network.
- Uphold that for young people whose assessment outcome indicate that they are imminently homeless, the Local Authorities Duties under section 20/17 of the 1989 Children's Act take precedence over the duties in the 1996 Housing Act.
- A commitment from partner agencies to ensure services provided will as much as possible be within the local community of the children and their families.
- Information sharing; All parties will adhere to the government guidance "[Information sharing Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers](#)".

- Joint assessments between CYPS and Housing services will determine the needs of the child, and the services required to meet this need. Assessment timescales should not undermine the provision of services.

### **3. Joint Commitments**

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- The County Council and Districts & Borough Councils all want to achieve what is best for 16/17-year olds - this will typically mean a 16 / 17-year-old remaining living with their family, or existing network, where it is safe for them to do so.
- To prevent homelessness and achieve a landscape where no Suffolk young person is being placed in unsuitable accommodation, even on a temporary basis, ensuring adequate levels of accommodation are available.
- Commitment to joint assessments and closer working relationships between agencies will ensure that young people and families would not have to continue to repeat their stories to several professionals.
- Ensuring our young people have recourse to clear 'child friendly' information regarding their rights and entitlements. Understanding the full implications of decisions, they make.
- Advocacy will be offered to young people throughout the process.
- We will keep our young people at the centre of what we do and respecting the views of the young person, recognising that these can change. Consulting with them regularly regarding their pathway and experiences.
- To recognise the significant benefits of partnership working and joint assessments.
- To maintain records of 16/17 young people accommodated, to allow us to understand the scale and composition of presenting needs and shared following GDPR guidance. This data needs to influence the work of the County Council and the Local authorities, in terms of our processes and commissioning.
- The YPHAG will monitor sufficiency of suitable accommodation.
- Allied approach to the likelihood that young people may change their minds throughout this process, and it is legitimate for them to do so.
- To ensure all staff engage and complete joint protocol training as part of a 'rolling' training programme to enable consistent implementation of the protocol
- All partners will endeavour to ensure the young person 'leaflet' Appendix 3 will be shared in a timely manor

### **4. Purpose**

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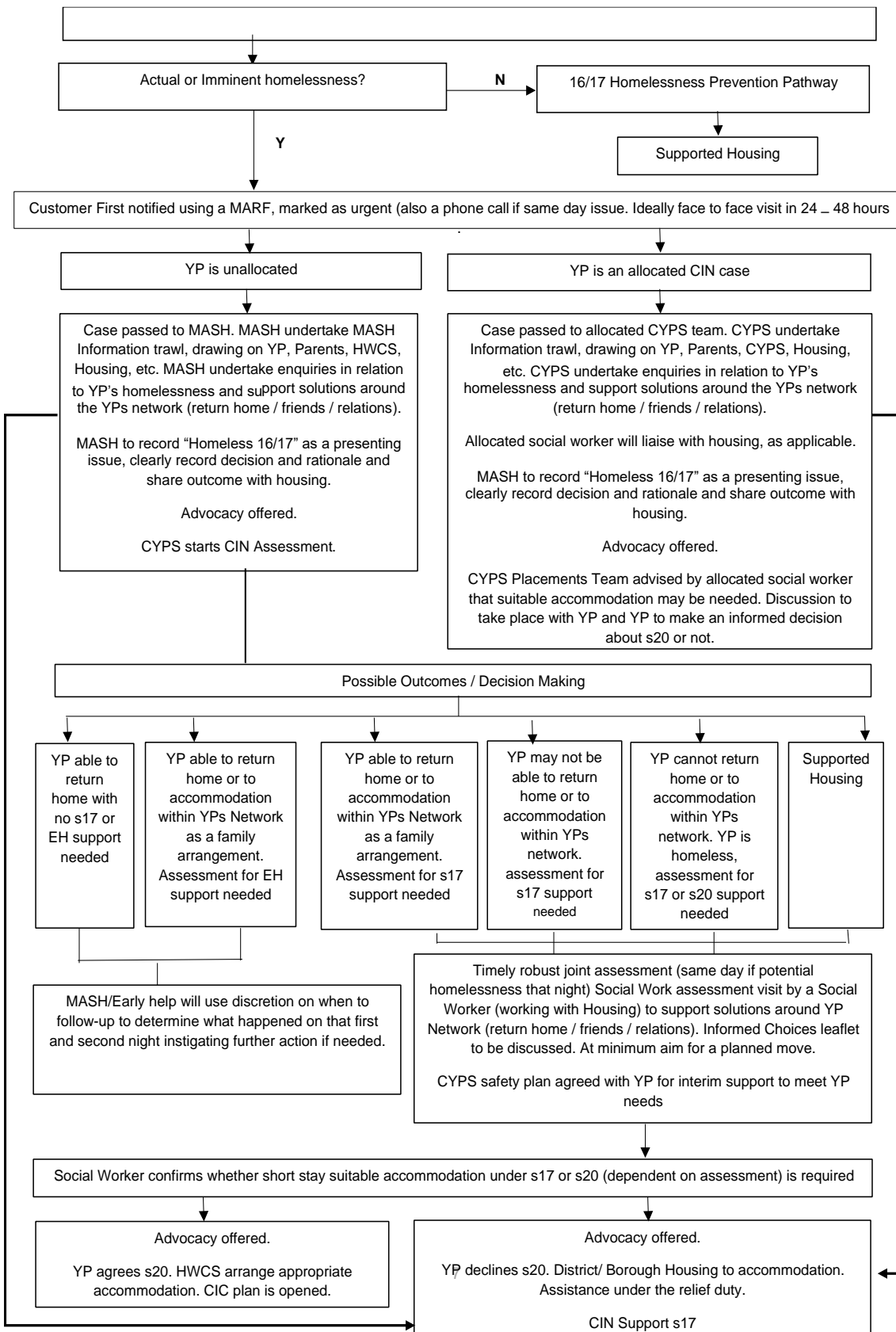
- 4.1 This protocol relates to responsibilities and duties to ensure the prevention of homelessness of young people aged 16 – 17.
- 4.2 This protocol aims to safeguard children and prevent homelessness through effective partnership arrangements, building on our existing work in this area.
- 4.3 We wish to make certain we all meet our statutory responsibilities.
- 4.4 We want our young people feel, safe, informed, and listened to.

## 5. Information

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- 5.1 Code of guidance for homeless 16- and 17-year olds.  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/provision-of-accommodation-for-16-and17-year-olds-who-may-be-homeless-and-or-require-accommodation>
- 5.2 The Children’s Act 1989, Chapter 41, Part III, Section 20 Provision of accommodation for children.
- 5.3 The Housing Act 1996, Part 7.  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/part/VII>
- 5.4 The House of Lords judgement of May 2009, in the case of G v LB Southwark and the subsequent statutory guidance issued in 2010 clarifying the interface between the duties under the Children’s Act and homeless legislation.

16/17 homeless issue presents to HWCS, District, Borough, Housing Provider, Police, Health, etc



## **7. Governance**

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7.1 The Young Person Housing Action Group and the Local Safeguarding Children's Board have ownership of this protocol.

## **8. Dispute Resolution**

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8.1 Complaint sources can be the County, the Boroughs / Districts, an advocate or by a young people themselves.

8.2 All disputes will be dealt with urgently following the agreed actions, principles and commitments within this protocol.

8.3 Where a joint decision is proving problematic a champion will be consulted in the first instance.

8.4 Where a joint decision remains problematic, the matter will be escalated to senior managers.

8.5 Case studies will be taken to the YPHAG where it is felt learning can be achieved, or the protocol needs reviewing. All partners will be notified of the individual case in advance to allow each organisation to fact find and invite the appropriate staff to openly discuss the individual circumstances and decisions made in the case.

8.6 Matters can be raised to the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership board when consensus cannot be reached.

8.7 Requirements on the level of provision needed by all partners should be reviewed at the YPHAG at regular intervals and will be at the next prelude meeting if any young person is placed into unsuitable accommodation.

8.8 Targeted training can be recommended and delivered by the group.

8.9 The overarching governance is with the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership board, and where necessary cases can be taken to this group for discussion.

## **9. What does success look like to us?**

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9.1 This protocol being used as an active resource and tool when considering homeless 16- and 17-year olds.

9.2 A consistent offer is experienced by young people of Suffolk.

9.3 Young people being suitably accommodated.



## 10. Appendix 1 - First Contact Script for 16/17 Year Olds

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The First Contact form is effectively a script of the actions to be taken and the questions to be asked in the first stages of a young person's homelessness presentation, including a referral form that is shared between MASH, the housing team, accommodation provider and the young person.

Please indicate the purpose of the referral (*tick all that apply*):

Support to return home

Referral to MASH Safeguarding Hub – *must be done if Homeless tonight*

Referral to Boroughs and Districts

These questions are the minimum we would expect to be asked of a young person when they present as homeless. The purpose of this is to ensure a consistent response and experience, regardless of whose front door the young person presents to and regardless of where in the county they present. This should prevent the young person from having to repeat their story unnecessarily.

*I'm going to need to ask you a few questions to find out more about you and to understand your situation. I will need to ask some personal questions so that we can work out how best to help you and I'll have to make some notes. I'm going to use notes to fill in a form that will start the process of getting you some help. Are you ok with that?*

<i>Can you give me some basic details about yourself?</i>	
Name	
DOB	
Address	
Postcode	
Contact Number/Email address	
Ethnicity	
Nationality	
Education	
Medical needs/ GP	

**CONTEXT AND IMMEDIATE ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS**

***The first thing we need to do is establish where you have been living and why you can't live there anymore, so can you tell me where you have been staying and what has been going on?***

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***Do you feel safe there? If no, please give details***

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***Do you have you somewhere to stay tonight? Can you go home or are there any friends or family members you could stay with? Is there anyone you could stay with where you would be safe and can I help you sort that?***

***Please state – name of person you are staying with, relationship, accommodation arrangements, household and contact details.***

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***If we 'phoned your carer and asked them if you could go back home, what do you think they would say?***

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***What could we do to help you to resolve the difficulties you are having at home?***

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**If the YP feels safe at home/where they have been staying, move to on statement support needs and risk**

**If there are safeguarding concerns, a referral must be made to MASH with a copy of this form attached. If there are no safeguarding concerns, move on to support needs and risk.**

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Other supplementary questions may be asked dependent upon the conversation. What we need to establish is why the YP believes they are no longer able to live at home, and whether it is possible to “hold” the position at home and prevent homelessness. If they are not at home, how long is it since they left home, how long have they been in an interim arrangement and why has that ended? The questions above are what we identified in conjunction with YP who had experienced homelessness, professionals who support these young people, and both were involved in the development of the script.

#### EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION – HOMELESS TONIGHT

At this point please issue the Young Persons advice leaflet and discuss the short term options

Dependent on the YP’s circumstances, ask about food and benefits as part of this conversation or pick up under Action & Next Steps.

#### SUPPORT NEEDS AND RISK

*The next thing we need to establish is whether you are getting any help from anyone right now. This will help us work out if you need any extra support and who best can do that. We can offer you help to sort things out with your parent(s). Lots of young people fall out with their parents and it can take a bit of time to sort, but it’s much better to be at home/with your family until you’re 18 and then plan your move if that’s what you need or want to do.*

*Are there any agencies you are involved with/are there any other people you see, who help you or give you support? E.g social care, Education, Health, early help, CAMHS, housing, family or friend??*

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*How are you feeling in yourself?*

*Can you describe in some detail please?* \_\_\_\_\_

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If negative, then carry on with:

**Can you tell me more about what is making you feel like that?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Is there anything that makes it better?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Is there anything that makes it worse?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Before we can look at what happens next, we just need to build up as clear a picture as possible of you and identify anything that might help you or anything that may cause complications? Are there any offences you can tell me about or is there anything you are waiting to hear about? YES NO**

If yes, ask about involvement with Youth Justice (YJS),(get the name of the worker) the sentence, timing and generally get more detail. If the offence has not yet been dealt with (e.g. charge), we'd still like to know if relevant (e.g. Arson etc)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Do you know about what the housing options are for young people? Confirm leaflet seen and discussed Yes/No**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### **ACTION & NEXT STEPS**

**What I would like to do now is talk you through what happens next, where this information goes and what happens to it but before I do that, I would like to hear about what you would like to see happen and where you would like to be living.**

We are looking for the young person to expand beyond "I need somewhere to live" so that we understand their desired outcome; is it about a tenancy and support to manage, is it about support to return home, is it about living in supported accommodation etc...? Use the Housing Pathway for your district to talk the young person through the options, being realistic about their level of choice.

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***Is there someone you would like to be invited to meetings alongside you to help you put your case across and make sure that your voice is heard? We call this person an advocate. If you don't have someone but would like an advocate, we may be able to get one for you. You may be able to get help from an advocate if you feel you are not being listened to about any issue. An advocate may be able to act as a voice for you. If you are interested, I could ask if you meet the criteria and refer. Is this something you would be interested in? YES  
NO***

<b>Referral to Advocacy</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>Date: _____</b>
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***So, I said at the beginning that I was going to take some notes and fill in a form; I'd like us to go through briefly what I have written on the form to make sure that you agree this is a fair record of what we have discussed. With your permission, I will now share this information with Children's Services so that they can do a first assessment of what your needs are and we can start to work out how best to help you.***

***Are you happy for me to share this information? If your case is given to someone in children's services, then they will be in touch with you as soon as possible, within a maximum of 24 hours. If your case is not passed to the local team, we will look at other ways to support you.***

I give permission for Suffolk County Council and \_\_\_\_\_ D/B Council to share and store the information contained in this document and that any relevant agencies that are involved in my care and support can be contacted.

I understand that if the information on this form is untrue and incorrect and that any false or misleading information may lead to:

- My referral being cancelled; and/or
- An offer of support/accommodation being withdrawn.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

***I will now contact the Emergency Team Social Worker and between us we will agree a solution for your immediate accommodation needs. On Monday, your details will be passed to MASH for them to look at your circumstances in more detail.***

**IF OUT OF HOURS:**

***I will copy the form so that I have a copy and you have a copy as well as the one I will send to Children's Services We will email this to you***

***I will now contact Children's Services, to discuss with them how best to proceed and how to support you. They will carry out an assessment of your needs. If you are homeless and have nowhere suitable to stay; we will work together to find suitable, temporary accommodation for you whilst this assessment is undertaken, and we continue the conversation about your longer-term needs.***

**Name of Referrer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Organisation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Details:** \_\_\_\_\_

If you are making a referral for a 16/17-year-old into supported accommodation, this signed and completed form needs to be sent to the contact detailed below. Please note you also can contact the relevant accommodation provider directly at this time to discuss and progress this referral.

**Postal Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail: within 24hours. Please check your junk mail.**

**Telephone enquiries:** \_\_\_\_\_

## 11. Appendix 2 – Children Social Care and Housing Options Contacts

Local Authority	Email	Telephone number	Out of Hours Telephone numbers
<b>Children's Social Care</b> (Customer First)	<a href="mailto:customer.first@suffolk.gov.uk">customer.first@suffolk.gov.uk</a>	0808 800 4005 Monday to Thursday 8am to 5:20pm, Fridays 8am to 4:20pm (excluding bank holidays)	0800 917 1109
<b>Ipswich Borough Council</b> - Duty line	<a href="mailto:housing.options@ipswich.gov.uk">housing.options@ipswich.gov.uk</a>	01473 433033	01473 433444
Nicola Clarke Housing Options Manager	<a href="mailto:Nicola.clarke@ipswich.gov.uk">Nicola.clarke@ipswich.gov.uk</a>	01473 433261	
Bridie Green Housing Options Manager	<a href="mailto:Bridie.green@ipswich.gov.uk">Bridie.green@ipswich.gov.uk</a>	01473 433222	
<b>Babergh / Mid Suffolk District Council</b> - Triage	<a href="mailto:housingoptions@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk">housingoptions@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	01473 296452 0300 123 4000, option 3 for housing.	0808 1687794
Victoria Stuart Professional Lead- Housing Solutions	<a href="mailto:Victoria.Stuart@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk">Victoria.Stuart@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	01473 296452	
<b>East Suffolk Council</b>	<a href="mailto:Housing.needs@eastsuffolk.gov.uk">Housing.needs@eastsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	01502 527132 0333 0162000	0800 4402516
Poppy Wragg Senior Housing Needs Officer South Team	<a href="mailto:poppy.wragg@eastsuffolk.gov.uk">poppy.wragg@eastsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	01394 444214	
Fern Lincoln Senior Housing Needs Officer North Team	<a href="mailto:Fern.lincoln@eastsuffolk.gov.uk">Fern.lincoln@eastsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	01502 523138	
<b>West Suffolk</b>	<a href="mailto:customer.services@westsuffolk.gov.uk">customer.services@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	01284 763233	01284 763252
Sara Lomax Service manager Housing Options.	<a href="mailto:Sara.lomax@westsuffolk.gov.uk">Sara.lomax@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	01284 757151	

## 12. Appendix 3 – Protocol training

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### **Provision of ongoing training**

To promote awareness and effective use of the Protocol, training will be accessible to all relevant staff.

It will be provided on a yearly basis in the different Suffolk localities. Practitioners, team leaders and managers across the county will be encouraged to attend mixed courses and team specific training will be arranged where appropriate.

Face-to-face training is preferred as it will help to build relationships and promote networking but online training will be used where necessary to maximise accessibility and attendance.

### **Course details**

**Course title: Using Suffolk's Joint Protocol to help homeless 16&17 year olds**

The course aims to promote effective joint working to ensure the needs of homeless 16 and 17 year olds are met by using the County's Joint Protocol.

The course will cover:

- The law behind the protocol
- The importance of collaborative working, including joint assessments
- The importance of homelessness prevention, including reunification
- The importance of the young person's wishes and the role of advocacy
- Accommodation options
- The Protocol's dispute process
- Good practice

This course represents an opportunity to explore how we can work better together to improve the lives of young people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and delegates will be encouraged to share their experiences and ideas.

The course is aimed at practitioners who work with young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, especially local authority staff from the Districts, Boroughs and County.

The training is provided by a Professional Advisor from Children's and Young People's Services and a Specialist Support and Training Officer from FIAS (Financial Inclusion and Advice and Service), with support from senior members of district and borough Housing Options Teams.



## 13. Appendix 4: Glossary

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ACS	Adult and Community Services
CIC	Child In Care
CIN	Child In Need
CYP / CYPS	Children and Young People's Services
EH	Early Help
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulations
HWCS	Health, Wellbeing and Children's Services
MARF	Multi-Agency Referral Form
MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
SSP	Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership
YP	Young Person
YPHAG	Young Person's Housing Action Group