Department for Education

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Care Leaver Homelessness Reduction Action Plan

November 2026

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Joint ministerial foreword

A safe, secure home is the foundation for successful adult life. It provides the stability for young people to develop enduring relationships, pursue education, employment, good health and wellbeing to help them thrive. Yet too many care-experienced young people face barriers in accessing and sustaining suitable accommodation, placing them at heightened risk of homelessness and rough sleeping.

As Ministers responsible for children's social care and homelessness, we are united in our belief that no young person should become homeless when leaving care. This action plan, developed jointly by the Department for Education and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, sets out our shared national commitment to preventing isolation, homelessness, and improving outcomes for care-experienced young people.

Homelessness among care leavers is rarely the result of a single event. More often, it arises from a combination of challenges that develop over time, including relationship breakdown, poor mental health, financial pressures, gaps in support, and a shortage of suitable housing options. We know, however, that these risks can be identified and addressed before a person reaches crisis point.

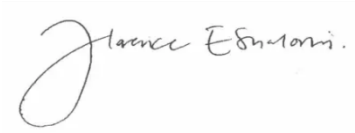
Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping is not the responsibility of any one service alone. Children's social care, housing authorities, mayoral strategic authorities, health services, education providers, youth justice services, voluntary and community organisations, and wider public bodies all have a vital role to play. Local and national government share a responsibility to provide care leavers with the same support, stability and opportunity that any good parent would want for their child.

This action plan reflects the shared commitment of our departments to work together nationally and locally to deliver lasting change. While care leavers under 25 account for less than 1% of people estimated to be sleeping rough per month in England, no young person should ever experience rough sleeping. The Prime Minister has pledged to end rough sleeping at the earliest opportunity, and prevention is key to achieving this. Our ambition is clear: by the end of this Parliament, no young person should become homeless when leaving care, and we will halve the proportion of care leavers under 25 who experience homelessness.

These are ambitious targets, but with strong partnerships and focus on prevention, we can ensure that care leavers receive the support they need to secure stable homes, develop enduring relationships and make successful transitions into adulthood.



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Minister for Children & Families
Department for Education



Florence Eshalomi MP
Minister for Homelessness, Democracy, Communities & Faith
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Chapter 1: Why is an action plan needed?

The challenge facing care leavers

Care experienced young people should have the same opportunities to thrive as their peers, but many make the transition to adulthood without the family networks, practical support and financial assistance that other young people can rely on. Through our shared corporate parenting responsibilities, national and local government, together with wider partners and the voluntary, community and faith sector, play a vital role in ensuring care leavers can access safe and suitable housing, build and sustain positive and supportive relationships, and achieve successful and fulfilling adult lives.

The number of care leavers in England is rising: between 2023 and 2025, the total number of care leavers aged 18 to 24 rose from 79,160 to 86,890 – an increase of 9.8% in just two years. At the same time, they are over-represented in the homelessness system. In 2024/25, 56,610 young people aged 18-24 were owed a homelessness duty by local authorities, and 6,360 households were owed a homelessness duty with a care leaver support need[1]. Since 2018/19, homelessness duties owed to households with a care leaver support need aged 18 to 20 have increased at almost three times the rate of homelessness duties owed to households overall.

Too often, care leavers face barriers to securing and sustaining suitable accommodation. Some leave care without stable accommodation in place, while others, without the right consistent support, experience housing instability that places them at risk of homelessness or leads them to seek support through homelessness services. Homelessness has a significant impact on a young person's wellbeing, relationships, education, employment and long-term life chances, which is why a focus on early intervention and prevention is important.

Our ambition for this action plan

The Department for Education (DfE) and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have developed this action plan to reduce the proportion of care leavers experiencing homelessness. The action plan is centred around two targets to be achieved by the end of this Parliament:

1) Ensure that no young person becomes homeless when leaving care; and

2) Halve the proportion of care leavers under 25 experiencing homelessness.

Achieving these targets requires coordinated action at both a national and local level. Alongside wider reforms to strengthen support for care leavers, we must improve housing

[1] Statutory homelessness in England: financial year 2024-25 - GOV.UK

pathways, strengthen joint working between housing and children's services, and ensure that care leavers receive the same support, stability and opportunities that any good parent would want for their child.

This action plan serves two purposes. First, it sets out the Government's ambition, targets and programme of work to reduce homelessness among care leavers. Second, it brings together the guidance, tools, resources and support available to local authorities and their partners to help strengthen local prevention activity and deliver these ambitions.

The following chapters explain how we will deliver these ambitions and the support available to help local authorities prevent homelessness among care leavers. This includes updated guidance on local offers and homelessness, as well as practical guidance on housing pathways and joint working between housing and children's services.

It sets out the Government's wider approach to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping, alongside specific targets to reduce homelessness among care leavers. It also outlines the reforms, partnerships and accountability arrangements needed to support delivery, and the actions DfE and MHCLG will take through three priorities:

- Improving access to housing
- Preventing tenancy and placement breakdown
- Strengthening local authority practice and partnership working.

A core principle of this action plan is that homelessness prevention starts long before a housing crisis occurs. Young people, and the people who matter to them, including siblings, carers, and wider family members, should be at the centre of pathway planning from an earlier stage. Supporting young people to maintain meaningful relationships, as well as helping them rebuild lost connections, can strengthen their support networks, increase resilience, and significantly reduce their risk of homelessness.

By focusing on prevention, stability, and strong support systems, this action plan aims to ensure that care leavers are not only protected from homelessness but are given the foundation they need to lead fulfilling, independent lives.

Chapter 2: Our national response to homelessness and rough sleeping

On his first day in office the Prime Minister launched an urgent national drive to end rough sleeping at the earliest opportunity. MHCLG has launched a new Rough Sleeping Programme, investing £874 million over three years to support this ambition. This takes the total investment in homelessness and rough sleeping services to more than £4.4 billion and builds on the actions set out in our strategy, A National Plan to End Homelessness. The Rough Sleeping Programme will include immediate access to accommodation and support to be in place before Christmas, while helping people move towards settled accommodation where appropriate, and funding intensive support and accommodation for people with the most complex needs and experiences of long-term rough sleeping.

We recognise that young people sleeping rough may take steps to avoid being visible because of risks to their safety, including by walking through the night, sleeping on public transport, sheltering in public buildings, or staying in other unsafe or transient settings. The Rough Sleeping Programme makes clear that local areas should use proactive identification and engagement approaches, so that young people are not left hidden from support until their needs become more entrenched. Local areas should also consider how accommodation options can meet the needs of young people and care leavers, taking account of individual circumstances and safety concerns. The Rough Sleeping Programme builds on existing actions through the strategy to shift the system towards preventing homelessness and rough sleeping before it takes place.

Homelessness should be rare because it is prevented wherever possible; brief because people can access the right support as soon as they need it; and non-recurring because no one should have to experience homelessness more than once in their lifetime. The strategy combines action to tackle the root causes of homelessness, including increasing the supply of social and affordable housing, with a renewed focus on prevention and earlier intervention. It also commits to ensuring public services work together more effectively through a new duty to collaborate, which will include considering how stronger joint working can better prevent homelessness among care leavers.

Alongside the Rough Sleeping Programme, the £47 million Ending Homelessness in Communities Fund is supporting a range of voluntary and community sector organisations, including specialist youth sector organisations, to work with groups facing particular barriers to accessing support. We are also launching a new £3 million Test, Learn, Grow fund focused on youth homelessness prevention, with further details to be announced in due course.

Chapter 3: Care leaver homelessness targets

To address the disproportionate risk of homelessness faced by young people leaving care and to drive coordinated, accountable action across services, we have developed two targets to meet **by the end of Parliament**.

Practice target

Ensure that no young person becomes homeless when leaving care.

Local processes and practices should be designed to prevent homelessness and should not require a homelessness application in order to secure settled accommodation for a young person leaving care. However, this continues to occur across some local authorities. Sometimes, this is the result of internal systems and processes that rely on homelessness applications to record or facilitate access to accommodation. Often, it is the result of insufficient coordination between leaving care teams and housing services, alongside financial pressures that can lead practitioners to advise young people to "present to housing". Where this happens, young people can be placed in unsuitable accommodation, making it difficult to maintain relationships with the key people who support them. The psychological impact of being categorised as homeless from the moment a young person leaves care should not be underestimated, sending a powerful and often damaging message about their place in society at the point they are expected to begin adulthood.

The proposed target aims to change this by improving planning and strengthening the support that local areas must offer. This includes making better use of stable and supportive housing options, such as Staying Put arrangements (where young people remain with foster carers) and supported lodgings.

Core changes to the care leaver local offer significantly strengthen the expectation that local authorities must publish their plans for care leavers' accommodation needs, work with housing partners, and support those at risk of homelessness. Greater emphasis is placed on early planning, collaboration, and securing suitable housing. To support this, we have published an updated version of the local offer guidance, alongside updated guidance on developing joint housing protocols for care leavers, to strengthen expectations around partnership working between housing and children's services and support more consistent implementation across local areas.

To further support these new requirements, we have published the planning housing pathways for care leavers guide based on evidence of good practice gathered nationally, showcasing how services can work together to create sustainable and suitable housing options for their care leavers. In 2027, we will also update the statutory guidance on social housing allocations, and this will reflect a strengthened focus on supporting care leavers to access suitable and stable accommodation.

We are also undertaking a practice review of Staying Put arrangements for young people leaving foster care and will be updating the guidance to improve how young people and foster carers are supported to enter into Staying Put arrangements.

By the end of this Parliament, our ambition is that no young person becomes homeless when leaving care. This data is monitored through MHCLG's statutory homelessness statistics on households owed a homelessness duty where the reason for loss, or threat of loss of last settled accommodation, was having left a Looked After Child placement. We recognise there could be exceptional cases in the data where applicants had interim housing or temporary arrangements after leaving care, with a Looked After Child placement recorded as their last official settled accommodation, however we expect these to be rare and exceptional cases.

Setting a local target

To check the number of households owed a homelessness duty locally, where the reason for loss or threat of loss of last settled accommodation was having left a Looked After Child placement, areas can refer to the latest published quarterly statutory homelessness statistics (H-CLIC), which can be found here. For example, within '*Detailed local authority level tables: [Month] to [Month] [Year]*' (Tabs A2P and A2R, column AM), local authorities can refer to the latest published quarterly data.

Local authorities should consider a local target against this metric which takes account of local context while aligning with the national target that no young person becomes homeless when leaving care by the end of this Parliament.

While this target is not a statutory requirement, we strongly encourage local authorities to include this target within their local homelessness action plans, alongside key actions they will take to achieve it. Where homelessness action plans have already been finalised for 1 December 2026, the target can be incorporated through subsequent reviews and updates. For further guidance on developing homelessness strategies and action plans, see Toolkit and guidance for developing homelessness Strategies and Action Plans - GOV.UK.

Reduction target

Halve the proportion of care leavers under 25 owed a homelessness duty.

Using a baseline of July-September 2025 (the latest available data when the National Plan to End Homelessness was published), 1,750 households owed a homelessness duty reported a 'care leaver' support need between the ages of 18-24. As the care leaver population is projected to grow by 12% (from 86,890 in 2025 to 97,470 by 2030) we have developed a rate-based target, measuring the proportion of care leavers owed a homelessness duty by the end of Parliament to ensure progress can still be tracked, even as the care leaver population grows.

Using the baseline data from MHCLG's statutory homelessness statistics (H-CLIC) and DfE's data on the number of care leavers in England, **we estimate that 2% of care leavers aged 18-24 are owed a homelessness duty per quarter. Our target is to halve this rate by the end of Parliament (to 1%)**. We are taking forward a package of interventions to support delivery against this target, as set out in the action plan delivery workstreams in chapter 7.

Setting a local target

Local authorities should consider a local target which takes account of local context while aligning with the national target to halve the proportion of care leavers under 25 owed a homelessness duty.

For example, to calculate the local proportion of households with care leavers aged 18-24 who are owed a homelessness duty for the baseline period of July-September 2025, areas can use[2]:

- Published statutory homelessness data (H-CLIC), which can be found here within *'Detailed local authority level tables: July to September 2025'* (Tab A3, Columns Q-R), and
- Total number of care leavers aged 18-24 in your area, held within your local authority, over the same time period.

With this data, local authorities can calculate a local rate-based target. For example:

- **13** households owed a homelessness duty reported a 'care leaver' support need (aged 18-24) – *for Jul-Sep 2025*
- **800** care leavers aged 18-24 – *in July-Sep 2025*
- **Baseline rate: 1.6%** of care leavers aged 18-24 were in households owed a homelessness duty per quarter in your area
- **Target: 0.8%** (half of the baseline rate)

In this example, the local authority would aim to reduce the proportion of care leavers owed a homelessness duty to at least 0.8%. Local authorities can monitor progress

[2] For two-tier local authority areas, we recommend calculating the total number of households with care leavers aged 18-24 owed a homelessness duty across all districts within the county area and comparing this to the total number of care leavers aged 18-24 for whom the county council is responsible. This will provide a consistent local baseline and support joint working between housing and children's services. Where local government reorganisation results in changes to local authority structures or reporting boundaries, authorities should ensure that local baselines remain consistent and comparable over time.

against this using the latest quarterly homelessness data, which can be found here[3] and care leaver population data.

See example below:

	Homeless care leavers	Care leaver population	% care leavers homeless
Q3 2025 - baseline	13	800	1.6%
Q4 2025	11	807	1.4%
Q1 2026 (current levels)	10	810	1.2%
Q2 2026	TBC	815	TBC

Although this target is not a statutory requirement, we strongly encourage local authorities to include this target within their local homelessness action plans, alongside key actions they will take to achieve it. Where homelessness action plans have already been finalised for 1 December 2026, the target can be incorporated through subsequent reviews and updates.

The Staying Close programme will play an important role in supporting local authorities to meet their local targets by helping care leavers access and sustain suitable accommodation. We will monitor local authority level care leaver homelessness rates as a key performance indicator for the programme, alongside delivery against agreed targets for additional care leavers moved into a suitable home through Staying Close.

[3] From January to March 2026 onwards, the data can be found in Tab A3, Columns N-O.

Chapter 4: Wider cross-government action to support care leavers earlier

This Government is delivering a range of reforms that support care leavers to build stable, independent lives and reduce the risk of homelessness before crisis occurs.

Strengthening support for care leavers through wider children's social care reform

Through the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 we are strengthening the support available to care leavers nationally:

1. The **Staying Close** duty will become a national duty owed to all former relevant children up to the age of 25 in 2029. The measure will require each local authority to assess whether they should provide 'staying close support' to each eligible care leaver, to help them find and keep suitable accommodation, and to access the wider enablers of services relating to health and wellbeing, relationships, education, training and employment and participation in society. The Staying Close programme will build capacity in local authorities ahead of the separate 2029 national duty. The Staying Close programme is already delivered across 50 sites (47 local authorities and 3 charities). An enhanced programme will be rolled out nationally by 2029 in a phased approach. It is focused on improving care leavers' housing outcomes, through enduring relationships, improved support and housing stability.

2. From 30 September 2026, the requirements for local authorities to publish their **local offer for care leavers** were amended by the introduction of an additional requirement for each local authority to publish the arrangements it has in place to support and assist care leavers in their transition to adulthood. Local authorities must include information about the authority's arrangements for anticipating the future needs of care leavers in respect of accommodation and specified services, co-operating with the housing authorities in its area, providing assistance to eligible care leavers who are at risk of homelessness, providing financial support and assisting care leavers to access services. Local authorities will also have to publish information about what financial literacy services they have as part of their local offer for care leavers, as well as information about the arrangements it has in place for providing financial support to care leavers.

3. **Extension of corporate parenting** duties from autumn 2027 will require Secretaries of State and key public bodies to take looked after children and care leavers into account when exercising their functions. One of the main causes of care leaver homelessness is that risks emerge in different areas before a housing crisis occurs, such as leaving custody, mental health deterioration or disengagement from services. The new duties will require local authorities, Secretaries of State and key public bodies, so far as reasonably practicable, to collaborate with each other when performing their corporate parenting duties,

where they consider that doing so would safeguard or promote the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers. This is intended to support earlier identification and response to risks, while reinforcing that addressing issues such as homelessness is a shared responsibility.

4. From 30 September 2026, local authorities can no longer find care leavers to be **intentionally homeless**. This applies to those who are defined under the Children Act 1989 as relevant children or former relevant children aged under 25. This change will help ensure that care leavers who become homeless have a stronger safety net and are able to access accommodation and targeted support, reducing their risk of rough sleeping.

Supporting young people through trusted relationships and opportunities

Strong relationships, trusted adults and access to opportunities help young people navigate key transitions and reduce the risk of homelessness. In July 2026, the Government published its Enduring Relationships Strategy, setting out a vision for all children in care to build and maintain the lasting, supportive relationships that improve resilience, wellbeing and long-term outcomes.

For care leavers, homelessness is often driven not only by a lack of accommodation but by the absence of the support networks that most young people rely on as they move into adulthood. The strategy supports wider care reforms by strengthening relationship-based practice, improving transition support and creating homes that help young people maintain lasting connections.

This is complemented by Youth Matters: Your National Youth Strategy, which aims to expand access to trusted adults, mentoring, education, training and employment opportunities. This includes investment in youth services: £2.5 billion into the Youth Guarantee and the Growth and Skills Levy, including the expansion of Youth Hubs to over 360 areas across Great Britain by 2029, £10 million for a mentoring and employability programme delivered with the King's Trust[4], and the rollout of 50 Young Futures Hubs by 2029. Alongside this, Young Futures Panels will identify young people vulnerable to being drawn into crime at local authority level and will ensure they have access to local support (including through Young Futures Hubs).

From 5 October 2026, changes to benefit rules for eligible people in supported housing and temporary accommodation will also help young people keep more of their earnings as they move into work.

Together, these reforms strengthen relationships, expand opportunities and provide earlier support, helping to prevent homelessness before it occurs.

[4] Subject to business case approval

Improving health outcomes for care leavers

Research looking at care leavers found that 46 per cent had an identified mental health need, yet while in care these young people experience worse access to NHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services than others their age[5]. The Government is developing a new mental health strategy for adults and children[6]. The strategy will set out a long-term vision for transforming mental health care and is expected to include a focus on improving outcomes for children and young people. Good mental health is an important protective factor against homelessness and housing instability, and we will continue to work across government to ensure that the needs of care leavers are reflected in wider mental health reforms.

The government published the Review of early deaths of care leavers - GOV.UK - 'You really are on your own', on 25 August. The review highlights the profound isolation that many young people experience as they leave care and transition into adulthood. Our commitment to ensuring that every care-experienced young person is surrounded by a loving and supportive network of relationships is reflected in the reforms set out above.

Preventing young people entering the youth justice system

Young people with care experience are also disproportionately represented within the youth justice system – self-reported findings from children surveyed in Young Offender Institutions and the Secure Training Centre in 2024/25 suggested that 65% had at some point been in local authority care[7]. Many of whom experience trauma, instability or other challenges before coming into contact with youth justice services. Preventing offending and intervening early can help improve long-term outcomes and reduce the risk of homelessness and other forms of crisis.

Through the Youth Justice White Paper, Cutting Youth Crime, Changing Young Lives, the Government has set out a programme of reform to create a more preventative, joined-up and evidence-led youth justice system. The reforms place a strong emphasis on early intervention, improving coordination between agencies and ensuring that children receive support at the earliest opportunity, before risks escalate and outcomes worsen.

Alongside this, the new Youth Justice Innovation Fund will support local areas to test radical new approaches to reducing youth offending. These reforms address factors that can contribute to homelessness and support young people, including those with care experience, to make successful transitions into adulthood.

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[5] neglected-minds.pdf; A call for change

[6] Government to transform mental health care with new strategy - GOV.UK

[7] Children in custody 2024–25 – HM Inspectorate of Prisons

Chapter 5: Collaboration across local areas

Effective collaboration between housing authorities, children's social care, mayoral strategic authorities, education, health services, youth justice, voluntary, community and faith sector organisations, and other relevant partners is essential to meeting the housing needs of care leavers, who often require support from multiple services. Without coordinated planning and delivery, support can become fragmented, increasing the risk of poor outcomes. This fragmentation is especially acute during the transition from care to independence, when young people can experience a sudden reduction in support. Mayoral strategic authorities play an important role in convening partners and supporting collaboration across local authority boundaries.

Strong partnership working between local areas helps ensure continuity of care and access to appropriate housing, regardless of where a young person lives. This is particularly important where young people move between areas for education, employment, family relationships or support networks. It enables consistent approaches to supporting care leavers to access housing, reduces the likelihood of unsuitable placements, and supports smoother transitions between services.

Joint housing protocols and local offer

To support local authorities, we have updated the good practice advice on developing joint housing protocols for care leavers, found here: Joint housing protocols for care leavers - GOV.UK. These protocols should be jointly developed between children's services and housing authorities to establish a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities. Effective protocols promote information sharing, joint working on pathway planning, clear escalation routes where issues arise, and agreed approaches to preventing homelessness, supporting tenancy sustainment and securing suitable accommodation.

Alongside this, we have published updated guidance to support local authorities to meet their new local offer duties introduced through the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026. The updated guidance can be found here: Local offer guidance - GOV.UK: The local offer must include specific content on areas to prevent homelessness, including information about how they:

- anticipate the future accommodation needs of care-experienced young people, both before the young person leaves care and on an ongoing basis once they have left care;
- co-operate with local housing authorities in their area to assist former relevant children aged under 25 to find and keep suitable accommodation; and

- provide assistance to former relevant children under 25 who are at risk of homelessness or leaving custody (where they have been detained in prison, a young offender institution or a secure training centre).

In practice, this means the local offer and the joint housing protocol should be developed and kept under review in tandem, so that the housing commitments described to care leavers are underpinned by clear multi-agency partnership arrangements for delivery. We encourage local authorities to include a link to their joint housing protocol within their published local offer so that care leavers, advocates and professionals can easily access the protocol and understand the agreed local arrangements for planning and providing accommodation and support.

Strategic planning and sufficiency

Local authorities have an important role in understanding and planning for the accommodation needs of care leavers, including forecasting future demand, identifying gaps in provision, and ensuring a sufficient supply of suitable accommodation and support. This should be supported by partnership working with mayoral strategic authorities and other relevant partners where they can help coordinate planning, investment and service provision across wider geographies. To support local authorities, we have published a package of new and updated guidance, toolkits and good practice resources, including:

- updated guidance on developing joint housing protocols;
- updated guidance on the local offer;
- new chapter in the Homelessness Code of Guidance: *'Chapter 22: Young people, including those with lived experience'* ; and
- new Preventing Youth Homelessness Self-assessment Toolkit.
- planning housing pathways for care leavers

Local authorities should also continue to refer to the Volume 3 statutory guidance for local authorities on helping care leavers aged 16 and 17 prepare for adulthood.

Under the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023, local authorities are required to produce and publish Local Supported Housing Strategies. These strategies provide an opportunity for local authorities to assess the current and future accommodation and support needs of care leavers, including the sufficiency of local provision, gaps in supported housing pathways, and the support needed to help care leavers move successfully towards independent living. To support local authorities to prepare and deliver strategies under the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023, we have published guidance here: Local Supported Housing Strategies - GOV.UK

By working together, local authorities, mayoral strategic authorities and wider partners can provide more stable and joined-up support systems, helping care leavers sustain tenancies, maintain relationships, and successfully transition into adulthood.

Chapter 6: Monitoring and accountability

Monitoring and outcomes

MHCLG and DfE will monitor progress against the targets, to be achieved by the end of this Parliament, through MHCLG's statutory homelessness statistics:

1) Ensure that no young person becomes homeless when leaving care; and

2) Halve the proportion of care leavers under 25 experiencing homelessness.

The underlying data to track these targets is published both quarterly and annually from MHCLG's statutory homelessness statistics (H-CLIC). Local authorities can use the latest quarterly published data to monitor regular progress against their local baselines and identify areas requiring further action. See Chapter 3 for more information.

We strongly encourage local authorities to consider how they will prevent and reduce homelessness among care leavers through these targets within their local homelessness action plans. This should include the actions they will take to meet local need, strengthen partnership working and contribute towards the ambitions set out in this action plan. Local authorities are required to publish their action plans by 1 December 2026, and these must be regularly updated. Where local homelessness action plans have already been finalised, the targets can be incorporated through subsequent reviews and updates.

MHCLG youth homelessness advisers will undertake targeted monitoring and support focused on care leaver homelessness. This will include reviewing instances where households are owed a homelessness duty following the end of a Looked After Child placement. Where concerns are identified, MHCLG will escalate these to DfE, who will jointly work with local authority housing and children's services to understand the issues, support improvement activity and help strengthen local arrangements to prevent homelessness among care leavers.

DfE will also monitor implementation of the new local offer requirements for care leavers. This will include assessing how local authorities are setting out the accommodation support available to care leavers, working with housing partners to meet identified needs, and demonstrating progress against the actions and commitments described in their local offer.

Ofsted inspectors will also consider local authority arrangements for supporting care leavers as part of their wider pre-inspection activity and inspection frameworks. This

includes considering how local authorities support young people to access suitable accommodation and prevent homelessness after leaving care.

Governance and oversight

Delivery of this action plan will be overseen jointly by DfE and MHCLG. Progress against the targets and workstreams will be reviewed through existing cross-government governance arrangements and we will monitor progress and actions through published statutory homelessness data and local published homelessness action plans, using this information to identify areas where additional support may be needed to reduce homelessness among care leavers.

The Inter-Ministerial Group on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping brings together ministers from across government whose policy areas contribute to preventing and ending homelessness. Progress against the commitments in this action plan will contribute to the wider monitoring of the Government's homelessness strategy and provide an opportunity to identify and address barriers requiring cross-government action.

As part of MHCLG's wider accountability framework for the strategy, progress reports will be published at least every two years to track progress at a national level against our actions and targets. These reports will be overseen by the Inter-Ministerial Group and will include reporting on progress towards the care leaver homelessness targets set out in this action plan.

Chapter 7: DfE and MHCLG delivery workstreams

This chapter summarises the key areas of work led by DfE and MHCLG to achieve the targets. This includes putting recent legal changes into practice, such as new requirements for support offered to care leavers through the local offer, introducing an exemption from intentional homelessness decisions, and the national rollout of Staying Close. It also includes targeted support to help local authorities meet their new statutory duties by 30 September 2026. These workstreams are focused on addressing some of the main challenges within local services. Where housing, social care, and commissioning do not work together effectively, it can lead to gaps in support and inconsistent approaches.

The work aims to improve coordination and strengthen joint working across services. It also seeks to address practice to ensure time is taken to understand each young person's individual needs, goals, and circumstances.

At the heart of this work is a clear expectation that government and local authorities fully embrace their role as corporate parents. This means treating care leavers with the same care, support, and ambition that any good parent would provide –designing services around their needs and giving them the best possible start in adult life.

Supporting access to housing

This workstream focuses on improving access to suitable, stable and sustainable housing for care leavers. It strengthens how national policy should be consistently applied in practice to remove barriers to social housing, changes legislation and guidance to strengthen the safety net for care leavers who become homeless and prevent rough sleeping and supports local areas to develop effective local housing options and pathways for care leavers.

Table 1: Supporting access to housing workstreams

Work area	What we're doing	What this means for young people
Improving access to social housing	• Making sure councils apply social housing allocations rules consistently, so care leavers are treated fairly • Updating statutory social housing allocations guidance to clarify expectations for care leavers • Ensuring local connection tests for social housing, where these apply, do not apply to care leavers under 25 • Strongly encouraging councils to give the same level of priority to care leavers placed in their authority area and wish to stay, as their own care leavers • Monitoring local social housing allocations policies and proactively addressing inconsistencies	Fairer access to housing: fewer barriers, more consistent support, and a clearer pathway into stable homes
Protecting care leavers from intentional homelessness decisions	• Changing rules so certain care leavers under 25 cannot be found intentionally homeless. This comes into force on 30 September 2026 • Improving support for those with higher or more complex needs	Stronger safety net: preventing rough sleeping, more targeted support, and fewer young people falling into repeat homelessness
Providing better housing options and pathways – Planning Housing Pathways for Care Leavers	• A new guide setting out good practice approaches such as rent guarantor schemes, supported housing, and specialist services • Helping councils offer a wider range of housing choices	Better housing choices: this will give LAs and care leavers more suitable options leading to greater stability, more choice and less risk of unsuitable placements

Reducing tenancy and placement breakdown

This workstream aims to help care leavers maintain stable accommodation and prevent homelessness before it occurs. We will strengthen support to help young people sustain tenancies and placements, improve opportunities to remain connected to trusted adults and support networks, and equip care leavers with the practical, financial and emotional support needed to succeed in independent living. This includes strengthening Staying Close and Staying Put arrangements, supporting access to education and employment, and improving access to financial and life-skills support.

Table 2: Reducing tenancy and placement breakdown workstreams

Work area	What we're doing	What this means for young people
Helping young people find and keep safe accommodation - the Staying Close programme	• Helping young people find and keep safe, stable homes • Making it easier to access support for education, training, wellbeing, and building positive relationships	A better start and increased stability: young people can stay in their homes, continue education or work, and build trusted relationships
Expanding education & training opportunities	• Raising awareness of financial support, including bursaries and accommodation help • Working with providers to make sure support is easy to access	Improved opportunities: more young people stay in education or training and feel financially secure
Building financial & life skills	• Strengthening guidance to help young people manage money, pay bills, and live independently • Providing earlier and more consistent life-skills education	Greater life skills and confidence: young people develop the skills to manage their money and maintain their homes
Improving 'Staying Put' support	• Updating guidance so more young people can remain with foster families where appropriate • Ensuring consistent support across services	Stronger support networks: more young people can stay in familiar, supportive homes for longer

Supporting local authority strategies and practice change

This workstream focuses on supporting local authorities to strengthen prevention, improve joint working and embed good practice. We will update guidance, strengthen expectations around collaboration between housing and children's services, improve information available to care leavers, support local homelessness and housing planning, and encourage partnership working with mayoral strategic authorities and other local partners where this can support a more coordinated local response, while providing targeted advice and support where additional improvement is needed. Together, these actions will help local areas develop more coordinated and effective systems for preventing care leaver homelessness.

Table 3: Supporting local authority strategies and practice change

Work area	What we're doing	What this means for young people
Improving local support and information – local offer legislative changes	• Making sure councils clearly publish what housing and support is available • Strengthening guidance so young people's relationships and support networks stay central	Clearer information and support: young people better understand their options and rights, and get more consistent help
Better transition planning for leaving care	• Improving guidance so housing moves are well-planned and happen at the right time • Encouraging better support to build and maintain enduring relationships through the Enduring Relationships strategy	Smoother transitions: young people move into housing that suits their needs, with continued support
Stronger local homelessness plans	• Requiring councils to regularly update and publish their action plans to prevent and tackle homelessness • Encouraging areas to develop local targets to reduce homelessness among care leavers and ensure no young person becomes homeless when leaving care – supported by strong local joint housing protocols and reflected within wider published homelessness action plans	Earlier help: services work together to prevent homelessness before it happens
Planning for enough suitable housing	• Requiring councils to plan and publish how they will meet local housing needs • Improving understanding of what types of housing are needed	More suitable homes: better access to the right type of accommodation

Work area	What we're doing	What this means for young people
Targeted support where it's needed most – the care leaver rough sleeping programme	• Providing extra help and expert advice in areas with higher risk • Bringing services together to better support young people • Continued funding of the DfE programme in FY 2027/28	Focused help: young people in highest-need areas get more tailored support
Investing in homelessness prevention	• Investing record levels of funding for homelessness and rough sleeping services, including for supported housing services and voluntary, community and faith organisations that support young people • Targeting investment in support services for young people aged 18-25 • Introducing a new £3m Test, Learn, Grow fund focussed on youth homelessness prevention	More support available: increased access to support to prevent and tackle homelessness and rough sleeping
Strengthening corporate parenting	• Government departments and public bodies will become new corporate parents from Autumn 2027. This includes a 'duty to collaborate' with each other and local authorities. This may include sharing information, providing advice or assistance and coordinating activities so that care leavers receive joined-up high-quality services	A joined-up approach: improving the collaboration between central government/public bodies and local authorities to create better joined up services, policies and practices.
Duty to collaborate to prevent homelessness	• Introducing a new Duty to Collaborate, which will require key public bodies to take proactive steps to identify households at risk of homelessness, assess their needs, work together to prevent homelessness and take coordinated action	Embedding a preventative approach: making homelessness prevention a shared responsibility across services care leavers interact with

Chapter 8: Key actions for local authorities

Achieving the ambitions set out in this action plan will require coordinated action across housing, children's services, mayoral strategic authorities and wider local partners, reflecting the local authority's corporate parenting duties. This is particularly important for care leavers with complex needs or at risk of homelessness or rough sleeping, where effective prevention relies on housing and children's services retaining joint oversight, planning and responsibility for support.

The following section summarises key actions set out in this plan that local authorities should take forward to strengthen support for care leavers in their areas and prevent homelessness. Local authorities should use these actions to review their existing arrangements, identify areas for improvement, and ensure that care leavers' experiences inform the design and ongoing review of local services. Local authorities are strongly encouraged to include their local care leaver homelessness targets (see chapter 3) and the key actions to achieve them within their local homelessness action plans. Local homelessness action plans are required to be published by 1 December 2026 and kept regularly updated. Where local homelessness action plans have already been finalised, the targets can be incorporated through subsequent reviews and updates.

Table 4: Actions for local authorities

Area	Action	Further information
Local targets	Local authorities should consider local targets which take account of local context while aligning with the national targets: • Ensure that no young person becomes homeless when leaving care; and • Halve the proportion of care leavers under 25 experiencing homelessness. Local authorities are strongly encouraged to include these targets within their local homelessness action plans.	See chapter 5.

Area	Action	Further information
Homelessness strategies and action plans	Set out how the authority will prevent and reduce homelessness among care leavers within its local homelessness action plans – reflecting how the local care leaver targets above will be met. Complete the preventing youth homelessness self-assessment toolkit to identify what is working well, where practice needs strengthening, and what action is needed to improve prevention, early intervention, accommodation pathways, emergency response and long-term recovery.	See chapter 6 and toolkits: • toolkit for developing homelessness strategies and action plans • preventing youth homelessness self-assessment toolkit
Joint housing protocols	Jointly develop and strengthen joint housing protocols for care leavers between children's services and housing authorities.	See chapter 4 and good practice guidance on developing joint housing protocols.

Area	Action	Further information
Local offer	Publish and maintain a local offer that clearly sets out the services and support available to care leavers. This must include information on: • Anticipating the future accommodation needs of care-experienced young people, both before they leave care and on an ongoing basis once they have left care; • Co-operating with local housing authorities in their area to assist former relevant children aged under 25 to find and keep suitable accommodation; • Providing assistance to former relevant children under 25 who are at risk of homelessness or leaving custody; and • Financial literacy support and financial support they have available The local offer and the joint housing protocol should be developed and kept under review in tandem. Local authorities should include a link to their joint housing protocol within their published local offer.	See chapter 4 and local offer guidance.

Area	Action	Further information
Intentional homelessness	Ensure processes and staff training procedures have been updated to reflect amended legislation from 30 September that prevents certain care leavers under 25 from being found intentionally homeless. Review and strengthen joint housing protocols to prevent homelessness among care leavers.	See Homelessness Code of Guidance for local authorities and good practice guidance on developing joint housing protocols.
Social housing allocations	Review local social housing allocations policies to ensure they reflect that: • Care leavers under the age of 25 are exempt from local connection or residency tests to facilitate their access to social housing in England; • Local authorities should also take into account the needs of all care leavers living in their area – and are strongly encouraged to give the same level of priority to those care leavers who have been placed in their authority area and wish to stay, as their own care leavers whom they have a duty to provide support and assistance up to age 25. Monitor applications and outcomes for care leavers to ensure the exemption is operating as intended in practice.	See social housing allocations guidance.

Area	Action	Further information
Sufficiency planning	Identify gaps in local provision and plan for a sufficient supply of suitable accommodation and support for care leavers. This should be considered and published within your Local Supported Housing Strategy in accordance with the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023.	See chapter 4, guidance on local supported housing strategies, planning housing pathways for care leavers Volume 3 guidance.

Department for Education

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

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