

Housing Options for 16-18 Year Olds

- 1.1 Epping Forest District Council regularly receives requests from 16-18 year olds with assistance in securing accommodation.
- 1.2 Under Section 179 of the Housing Act 1996 Part VII, every local authority shall ensure that advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness is available free of charge to any person in their district.
- 1.3 From the outset, if a 16-18 year old is seeking assistance with housing options from Epping Forest District Council, then a plan of action will be put in place by the homeless prevention officer to prevent homelessness.
- 1.4 This Authority works with Relate, who currently provide a mediation service to this Authority. If a 16-17 year old is faced with exclusion then immediate attempts will be made to engage with Relate. Since this Authority started working with Relate in June 2005, 31 cases have been referred to them for mediation. From these, 70 per cent were successful in homelessness being prevented.
- 1.5 This Authority also works in conjunction with Connexions. This organisation provide a confidential service to young people. They are able to offer impartial advice on welfare benefits, employment and housing.
- 1.6 Should attempts be made by the prevention officer to prevent homelessness and this fails, then arrangements would normally be made to refer the client to the homeless section.
- 1.7 On referral, the homeless officer dealing with the application would be responsible for deciding on homelessness, eligibility, priority need and local connection.
- 1.8 Should homelessness be unavoidable and the person is aged 17 or under, then the Authority is duty bound to provide accommodation under Section 188 (1) of the Housing Act 1996 Part VII as amended.
- 1.9 At the stage of the application being taken and the Authority are concerned about the young person's ability to cope then a referral will be made to Social Services for a child in need assessment in accordance with our signed agreed protocol.
- 1.10 Should the person be placed into bed and breakfast accommodation, then the homeless officer would liaise closely with the housing welfare officer for temporary accommodation on the placement.
- 1.11 At this moment in time, the post of the Housing Welfare Officer for temporary accommodation is vacant. However, it has been recruited to and a start date for the appointed person will be confirmed shortly.

- 1.12 The role of the Housing Welfare Officer for temporary accommodation is to provide a welfare service for all residents in bed and breakfast, which would include 16-17 year olds. The post holder would work 18 hours a week and prioritise their time between the hotels and applicants. In their welfare capacity, they would ensure that each applicant is coping and making the necessary arrangements to engage with external agencies if required to do so.
- 1.13 The Housing Welfare Officer is responsible for liaising with the case officer and the applicant to agree on the most appropriate form of accommodation when moving from bed and breakfast accommodation.
- 1.14 In some cases, a referral to SAFE would be made - the single accommodation for people in Epping. This scheme provide a 39 dispersed bed scheme across the Epping Forest District. Their primary aim is to assist single people who are homeless aged under 25.
- 1.15 In this respect, the scheme provides supported accommodation for single people to assist them in gaining the necessary skills towards independent living.
- 1.16 Should the applicant's needs be greater then a referral to the Floating Support Scheme would be undertaken. The Floating Support Scheme is 12 bed scheme managed by Swan (London). The scheme provides independent accommodation for single people who are vulnerable. Some of which may be vulnerable on account of their young age or on account of a medical condition. Once the person has attained sufficient skills, they would then come off the scheme and be offered the accommodation they occupy on a settled basis.
- 1.17 The initiatives that this Authority undertakes in dealing with 16-18 year olds is wide and varied. However, the main consideration is to prevent homelessness whenever we can. Should this not be the case, then we would ensure that if a duty exists to provide accommodation then we would take all the necessary action to assist them in sustaining this.