



Housing Circular: 20/2025

Date: 27 June 2025

Revised Protocol on Young People Leaving State Care

Dear Chief Executive,

I am directed by Mr James Browne, T.D., Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage to refer to the national Youth Homelessness Strategy.

Action 7 of this Strategy provides for a review and update of Housing Circular 46/2014 on the Protocol on Young People Leaving State Care. This Protocol had been developed on foot of the publication of the Implementation Plan on the State's Response to Homelessness which recognised the need to ensure appropriate forward planning for the future accommodation and support needs of young people leaving State care.

Since then, there have been a number of significant legislative and policy developments in the area of young people leaving State care and/or at risk of homelessness. It is, therefore, timely to update this Protocol now.

Relevant developments since 2014

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage / local authorities

1. Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)

HAP was introduced in 2014 as a form of social housing support available for people who have a long-term housing need. Additional supports are available under HAP for homeless households or households at risk of homelessness nationwide. The Homeless HAP Place Finder Service has been established nationwide to assist households in or at immediate risk of homelessness by providing access to deposits and advance rental payments. In addition, since July 2022, the HAP discretion rate has been increased from 20% to a maximum of 35% for all local authority areas (up to 50% for homeless households in Dublin region). As this applies to both new and existing tenancies, it will secure more tenancies and prevent new entries to homelessness. Additional flexibility has also been introduced to allow local authorities to apply a couple rate to a single person household, where required, in recognition of the shared one-bed need for new tenancies. Since 1 March 2024, tenants and landlords can apply for HAP via an online portal.



2. Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) / Housing Circular 30/2017

With the publication of Housing Circular 30/2017, 'care leavers' were specifically listed as a priority category for which housing delivery via the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) could be supported. The Circular provides that where a local authority is informed by Tusla that there is a need for accommodation for people aged 18-21 (or up to 23 if in education/training) leaving State care and who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, it may invite AHBs to apply for CAS funding to provide appropriate accommodation.

3. Youth Homelessness Strategy

Published in November 2022, this Strategy aims to help those aged 18-24 who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. This Strategy adopts a whole-of-Government approach to tackling youth homelessness, bringing together a multitude of key stakeholders who play a vital role in addressing fundamental issues in youth homelessness. The Strategy recognises that there are certain cohorts who are particularly at risk of becoming homeless and are disproportionately represented in the young homeless population. The Strategy provides specific actions for these cohorts which includes those leaving State care.

Department of Children, Equality, Diversity, Integration and Youth / Tusla

4. Child Care (Amendment) Act 2015

Section 45 of the Child Care Act 1991 places a statutory duty on Tusla to form a view in relation to each person leaving care as to whether there is a "need for assistance" and if it forms such a view, to provide services in accordance with the legislation and subject to resources.

The legislative provision for aftercare was significantly strengthened and expanded by the Child Care (Amendment) Act 2015 which commenced in September 2017. The revised provisions now impose a statutory duty on Tusla to undertake an 'Assessment of Need' for an eligible child or eligible young person.

As a result, there now exists a legal obligation on Tusla to prepare an aftercare plan for every young person who is eligible for an aftercare service, which is informed by an 'Assessment of Need' carried out prior to the young person leaving care, and identifies the individual's need for aftercare supports. Section 45B (4)(b) of the Act outlines that the Plan shall set out the assistance Tusla may provide the young person in accessing a service by a public body which, in the context of this Protocol, shall be the relevant Housing Authority.



5. Children and Young People's Services Committees / Local Aftercare Interagency Steering Committees

Children and Young People's Services Committees, referred to in the Protocol, bring together a diverse group of agencies in local county areas to engage in joint planning and coordination of services for children and young people. The Area Manager for Children and Families (Tusla) chairs or leads these Committees and the vice chairperson is drawn from the local authority. There are 27 local CYPSCs, each supported by a local CYPSC Co-ordinator.

As set out in the Tusla National Aftercare Policy for Alternative Care 2017, 26 Local Aftercare Interagency Steering Committees are now established in all Tusla operational areas. Accommodation planning in respect of care leavers is a core element of the work carried out by these Committees, for example Local Aftercare Interagency Steering Committees are the referral point for CAS accommodation for care leavers. Tusla has advised however that local authorities are not consistently represented on all 26 Committees, a point this revised Protocol shall seek to address.

Local Aftercare Interagency Steering Committees provide a forum for planning, implementing and monitoring a comprehensive, integrative aftercare plan for young people in receipt of aftercare. A multidisciplinary, multi-agency approach has been taken. The Committee is chaired by the local Tusla Aftercare Manager who can determine the requirement to refer a case to the committee. This development has now been reflected in the revised Protocol on Young People Leaving State Care set out below.

It is noted that, while CYPSCs seek to serve the broad needs of children and young people, the specific accommodation needs of care leavers are primarily addressed through the Local Aftercare Interagency Steering Committees.

Updated Protocol

This Protocol has been developed in consultation with key stakeholders¹ and aims to ensure that the necessary measures are in place to prevent homelessness for young people leaving State care. Housing Authorities should utilise all of the support options

¹ Department of Children, Disability and Equality; Tusla; the CCMA; the National Homeless Action Committee; the Youth Homelessness Strategy Steering Group; and the Irish Coalition to End Youth Homelessness.



available to them so as to ensure that young people leaving State care do not become homeless.

This Protocol will continue to be kept under review in light of ongoing legislative and administrative developments in the area of aftercare planning and policy as well as the practical operation of the Protocol.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Rosemarie Tobin", enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Rosemarie Tobin
Principal Officer
Homelessness Policy, Funding and Delivery



Revised Joint Working Protocol between Tusla and Housing Authorities

Young People Leaving State Care

In order to ensure good practice to meet the accommodation and support needs of young people leaving the care of Tusla (the Agency), the Agency and Housing Authorities (HAs) agree that:

1. The Agency will continue to further develop Local Aftercare Interagency Steering Committees in line with Tusla structures and that of Housing Authorities, to manage the local transition of young people leaving State care. Both the Agency and Housing Authorities are represented on Local Aftercare Interagency Steering Committees. [Responsibility: Agency and HAs]
2. There will be continued engagement between Local Aftercare Interagency Steering Committees, Housing Authorities and Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSCs) so that identified gaps and challenges can be reported to the relevant sub-groups of the CYPSCs for consideration with a view to assisting in solution identification. Both the Agency and Housing Authorities are represented on CYPSCs. [Responsibility: Agency and HAs]
3. To ensure greater inter-agency collaboration in addressing the accommodation and support needs of young people leaving care, a more consistent and standardised approach across Housing Authorities is required. Each Housing Authority should be represented on Local Aftercare Interagency Steering Committees and CYPSCs. The relevant Housing Authority shall nominate an appropriate designated person to attend Local Aftercare Interagency Steering Committees. Insofar as possible, this person should also oversee all housing applications received by that Housing Authority for young people leaving care. [Responsibility: Agency and HAs]
4. Housing Authorities should note that there is no legal impediment to assessing a person less than 18 years of age for social housing support, should such support be required. If such support is required, it is recommended that an assessment is carried out in advance of the young person turning 18, with an effective date of the 18th birthday, if qualified. This assessment should be carried out upon completion of the Aftercare Plan i.e. six months before the young person turns 18. The Aftercare Worker should work with the young person to ensure that the application is completed correctly and that the application, along with any required supporting information, is sent to the correct Housing Authority. An appropriate



adult should be present for witnessing and signing of any forms. [Responsibility: Agency and HAs]

5. There has been an increase in recent years in the number of separated children seeking international protection who require support and accommodation from Tusla. Tusla should inform the relevant Housing Authority of these cases at the earliest possible juncture and a leaving care/support plan should be put in place when the time arises to mitigate the risk of entry into homeless emergency accommodation.

Housing Authorities should be aware that unaccompanied minors who do not have status when they turn 18 will move to the International Protection Accommodation System (IPAS). Unaccompanied minors who do have status when they turn 18 will generally be accommodated by Tusla until they complete their second level education at which point Tusla will then support them to move to alternative accommodation. All possible accommodation options should be explored and homeless emergency accommodation should only be used as an absolute last resort. Housing Authorities should also note that unaccompanied minors, like other young people in care, are entitled to aftercare supports if they have spent 12 months in the care of the state with Tusla between the ages of 13-18. [Responsibility: Agency and HAs].

6. The Agency will provide an annual “Young People Leaving State Care Protocol Report” to Housing Authorities, indicating the number of young people due to leave the care of the Agency within the coming 12-month period. This data should be categorised by placement type i.e. foster care, residential care etc. The Agency shall ensure that this Report is provided to the Director of Housing in the relevant Housing Authority no later than Q3 of any given year. The Director of Housing should then ensure that this data is provided to the allocations officer as a priority to ensure suitable accommodation is identified prior to an individual leaving state care. [Responsibility: Agency and HAs]
7. If, as determined by the young person in agreement with relevant stakeholders, it is in the best interest of a young person leaving the care of the Agency to apply for social housing support in another Housing Authority area, the planned aftercare support will continue in the new area of residence. This will be set out in their Assessment of Need and referred to the Local Aftercare Interagency Steering Committee. [Responsibility: Agency]



8. Where a referral occurs, all relevant information in relation to the individual young person's housing support needs shall be discussed by the Local Aftercare Interagency Steering Committee. In exchanging information about a young person leaving care, Housing Authorities and the Agency should have regard to Data Protection / GDPR requirements including obtaining consent of the young person, as appropriate. [Responsibility: Agency and HAs].
9. In the development of Homelessness Action Plans, Housing Authorities will be cognisant of Housing Circular 27/2023 which requests Housing Authorities to ensure the specific inclusion of young people in all Homelessness Action Plans, with particular consideration given to those who have been identified in the Youth Homelessness Strategy as vulnerable cohorts. The vulnerable cohorts include those leaving care as well as young members of the Traveller community; young members of the LGBTI+ community; young people with disabilities; young people leaving prison and young parents, particularly those parenting alone. [Responsibility: HAs]
10. The procedure, detailed below, for the assessment of housing needs of young people leaving the care of the Agency will be adopted by Housing Authorities and the Agency. Chairs of the Local Aftercare Interagency Steering Committees should address the implementation of this Protocol in their annual reports, including any issues identified. [Responsibility: Agency and HAs]

Procedure: Guide to Housing Authorities and Tusla in assessing and progressing the housing and support needs of young people leaving the care of the Agency

The arrangements for the co-operation and co-ordination of Housing Authorities and the Agency in the assessment of the housing and support needs of young people leaving the care of the Agency are set out below with a view to providing practical guidance so as to achieve a clear pathway between services.

1. Where a young person, who has reached the age of 16 years, is eligible for an aftercare service, the allocated social worker will make a referral to the Aftercare Manager as soon as possible. If a young person is admitted to care after the recommended age of referral i.e. over 16 years and it is determined that they will spend 12 months in care, then a referral is submitted to the Tusla Aftercare Manager as soon as possible.



2. On determination of the young person's eligibility for an aftercare service, the Agency's Aftercare Service will work with the young person to assess and develop an Assessment of Need, which will include any accommodation needs the young person may have.
3. The Assessment of Need will assist and support the development of the young person's Aftercare Plan. As outlined within section 45B (4)(b) of the Child Care Act 1991, as amended by the Child Care (Amendment) Act 2015, the Plan shall set out the assistance Tusla may provide the young person in accessing a service by a public body which, in the context of this Protocol, shall be the Housing Authority.
4. If it is determined that the eligible young person requires a coordinated approach to ensure that appropriate services are engaged, the Agency's Aftercare Service may refer the eligible young person to the Local Aftercare Interagency Steering Committee where appropriate to do so. Accommodation planning for the young person shall be a core element of tasks in respect of the Committee.
5. Where the statutory Aftercare Plan for a young person identifies social housing as the most appropriate form of accommodation for a young person leaving the care of the Agency, the Housing Authority's representative shall engage with the Agency's Aftercare Service and shall provide information on housing options for the young person.
6. The Housing Authority's representative will also assist in the completion of the Social Housing Support Application Form, if required, and progress the assessment of need for social housing support. The Housing Authority representative may, where appropriate, assist in expediting the processing of the application.
7. Where the most appropriate response for a young person is deemed to be, and that young person is eligible for, social housing support, the Housing Authority's representative will assist with the relevant Agency's statutory care planning pertaining to the young person and future options being considered and planned for prior to the young person reaching 18 years and leaving the care of the Agency.
8. The Agency's Aftercare Service will advocate on behalf of the young person.
9. The Housing Authority will have regard to all housing supply and support options available that may be utilised to support the accommodation needs of young



people leaving the care of the Agency. In particular, Housing Authorities are encouraged to consider supported transitional and shared accommodation options for young people leaving state care where such support is appropriate and required and as identified in the young person's Assessment of Need. Housing Authorities are encouraged to support AHBs in providing such accommodation options.

10. Where the assessment of accommodation needs of the young person leaving the care of the Agency determines that social housing is the most appropriate form of accommodation for that young person, the provision of such social housing will be subject to availability and the operation of the relevant Housing Authorities' Allocations Scheme (i.e. Scheme of Letting Priorities).
11. In the event of a young person leaving the care of the Agency and subsequently entering homelessness and/or a placement comes to an end, the matter will be referred to the Local Aftercare Interagency Steering Committee as a matter of urgency. Young people in such circumstances will continue to be eligible for all the provisions under this Protocol and their case will remain active in the Local Aftercare Interagency Steering Committee until the young person reaches 20 years inclusive or 22 inclusive years (if in full-time education or training), at which point the housing needs of the young person in question will be managed through the existing arrangements to address adult homelessness. If there is a significant change in the circumstances in respect of the accommodation needs of the care leaver, their Aftercare Plan shall be reviewed accordingly.
12. It should be noted that the Agency offers an aftercare drop-in service to all care leavers where young people can receive advice on their entitlements and support with their Social Housing Support Applications. There is no age limit on this service. Any person with a care history may avail of the aftercare drop-in service for advice or guidance.