

Preventing Homelessness and Promoting Independence: A Positive Pathway to Adulthood

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

Preventing Homelessness and Promoting Independence: A Positive Pathway to Adulthood

Supporting young people on their journey to economic independence and success through housing advice, options and homelessness prevention

In drawing up the Welsh 'Positive Pathway' framework the Welsh Government has consulted with a wide range of local authorities, homelessness agencies, housing associations and the Welsh Local Government Association. In addition, we have consulted with young people through Cymorth Cymru. We want to thank everyone for their help. Their combined advice, sharing of expertise and positive support has been very informative and helped to shape this document.

The framework within this document promotes a 'positive pathway' to adulthood. It is based on the 'Positive Pathway' that St Basils, a youth homelessness agency in England has developed, with the advice and support of other agencies, young people and the Department for Communities and Local Government. We would like to thank St Basils for giving us their permission to adapt the England version.

Alongside this 'Positive Pathway' document, there is a 'sister' version which Barnardo's have developed specifically for young people leaving care in Wales. The 'Care Leaver Accommodation and Support framework' can be found here:

In addition to this summary document a more detailed pathway document has been developed including comprehensive guidance, good practice and case studies

This document is available here:

http://www.barnardos.org.uk/what_we_do/barnardos_today/wales/wales_policy/cym_policy_research_publications.htm

Contents

1) About the Positive pathway	Page 2
2) Diagram of the framework	Page 5
3) A Positive Pathway for young people in Wales Summary	Page 6

About the Positive Pathway

The 'Positive Pathway' is a flexible framework for local authorities and their partners to use to provide a planned approach to homelessness prevention and housing options for young people. It aims to help public service commissioners and providers of services work together in planning and delivering services for young people. The pathway has been developed recognising that safe, decent and affordable housing underpins achievement of other positive outcomes - whether these relate to education, training, employment, health, or safer communities.

The 'Positive Pathway' framework does not look at housing and homelessness in isolation. Its aim is to assist joint planning, commissioning and delivery of services to achieve outcomes across a range of domains for some of the most vulnerable groups of young people in Wales.

In 2016 the Welsh Government commissioned a project with the aim of developing youth housing options, pathways and homelessness prevention for young people. This 'Positive Pathway' framework is part of that project and the document has been developed through a combination of learning from what works well already, research, consultation, thinking about how to best respond to changes in policy and current practice in Wales and the UK.

There has been significant progress in Wales to improve homelessness prevention, including the introduction of new legislation in 2015 which placed a statutory duty on local authorities to both work to prevent and relieve homelessness for all households in Wales¹.

Alongside this, the new Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014² has introduced some changes relating to entitlements for young people leaving care and other groups of vulnerable young people, as well as a general duty around the local provision of information, advice and assistance for both children and adults. The Act also places the duty on a person exercising functions in relation to a child to have due regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).³ Decisions made, for example, regarding the provision of services or the allocation of resources therefore need to take into account the rights of all young people under the age of 18.

¹ The Housing Act (Wales) 2014 places a duty on local authorities to prevent and/or relieve homelessness amongst all households who are 'eligible'. See Part 2 of the Act here: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2014/7/contents/enacted>

² For more detail on the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014 see: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2014/4/contents/enacted>

³ Section 7(2) Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014

On the ground, local authorities, other public sector agencies, housing associations and third sector agencies continue to work together to provide services to vulnerable young people at risk of homelessness. There are significant challenges facing young people, families and the services that support them. In light of this, some local areas are reviewing and reshaping local services for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who, at the point of transition to adulthood, need advice and support, not just around accommodation options, but other elements of their lives as they become more independent.

In every area there are some young people with complex lives who need additional support to make a successful transition to adulthood. But others have a straightforward housing need which, if not addressed, could 'tip into' homelessness and all the difficulties that can present. Local authorities, education and training agencies, local NHS services, the National Probation Service and Wales Community Rehabilitation Company can all have a part to play in improving local responses if longer term costs are to be avoided and improved outcomes achieved.

The principles and rationale underpinning the 'Positive Pathway' framework resonate with and support the aspiration and practical application of the Well Being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015.⁴

The 5 well being principles of the Well Being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 can be usefully applied to the Positive Pathway approach.

Long Term - *The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.*

Prevention - *How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.*

Integration - *Considering how the public body's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.*

Collaboration - *Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives.*

Involvement - *The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves⁵.*

In practice locally this means:

- A focus on successful outcomes for young people - many of whom have multiple and complex needs across a range of areas of their lives;

⁴ For more information about The Well-Being of Future Generations Act 2015 see:

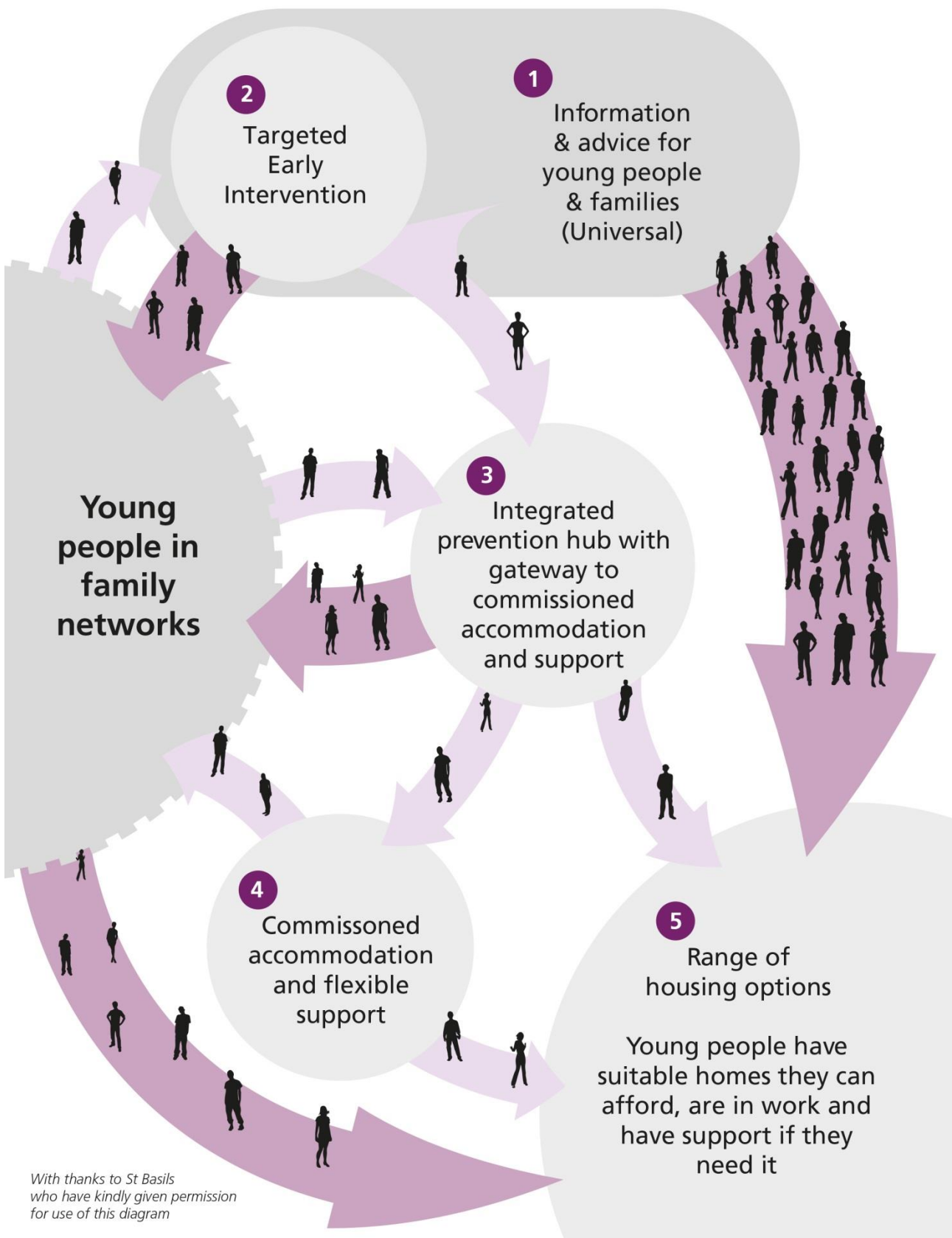
<http://thewaleswewant.co.uk/about/well-being-future-generations-wales-act-2015/well-being-future-generations-wales-act-2015>

⁵ For more information about the Well Being Of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 please see:

<http://thewaleswewant.co.uk/about>

- Organising services around young people's journeys as what they say makes the difference;
- An integrated approach from planning and commissioning through to service delivery;
- What already works well – and recognising the challenges ahead;
- Systems thinking - how to prevent homelessness and plan more effectively together;
- Involving young people in service improvement and development; and
- Sharing of data for analysis and planning and better use of technology.

Positive Pathway Model



With thanks to St Basils who have kindly given permission for use of this diagram

Positive Pathway Framework: The 5 Service Areas

1. Information and advice for all young people and families

The Service: Timely, accurate information and advice about local housing options available to everyone, delivered in a range of ways including web-based information and through schools to reach young people, families and professionals.

Desired results:

- Young people and families are empowered to plan transitions to independent living without support from specialist services.
- They understand the links between housing choice and their financial and employment situation.
- They know where to get help if they need it.

2. Targeted early intervention

The Service: Early intervention is targeted to reach households where young people are most likely to be at risk of homelessness. Delivery involving all local services working with young people and families at risk, e.g. Families First, Intensive Family Support Services (IFSS), Youth Services and Youth Offending/Justice Services. The provision of information, advice, assistance and the assessment of any care and support needs as required.

Desired Results:

- Prevention and protection - young people stay in the family network where possible, are safe and are supported to make planned moves if they need to move out.

3. Integrated response ('hub' or 'virtual hub') and gateway to commissioned accommodation and support

The Service: Led by the Housing Authority and Children's Services, an integrated service for young people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or need help with planned transitions to independence. Housing options and homelessness prevention services come together, often co-located, with other services including support for pathways into learning and work. This is underpinned by information, advice and assistance and the assessment of any care and support as well as housing needs. Includes a needs driven 'gateway' into commissioned supported accommodation and flexible floating support services.

This is a key data collection point which will inform on-going development of the local pathway.

Desired Results:

- Homelessness is prevented wherever possible, for example by supporting young people to stay in their family network or preventing the loss of a tenancy.
- Young people who need accommodation and/or support get it, including quick access suitable emergency accommodation and immediate and on-going support where needed.
- Young people's accommodation and support underpins rather than disrupts their pathways in to learning and work.

4. Commissioned accommodation and support

The Service: A range of accommodation and support options designed for younger and more vulnerable young people. Aligned to these options are local training and employment programmes.

Accommodation and support is linked together in some options, for example: supported accommodation schemes, supported lodgings, post 18 living arrangements under Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 “When I am ready” and Housing First. Flexible outreach support is also available to support young people wherever they live (including in the family home) and if it’s needed, it sticks with them when they move.

Desired Results:

- Young people gain the stability and skills they need, engage with learning, training and work and move on to greater independence.

5. Range of Housing Options

The Service: A range of safe, decent, affordable housing options, shared and self-contained, in the private and social housing sectors. The local offer will be shaped according to the local housing market and outlined in local housing strategies, using partnerships if needed to create options for young people starting out on low incomes. This may include creative approaches such as partnerships with learning providers, employers and employment services to link provision of accommodation to opportunities for learning and work. Promote access to flexible outreach/floating support in case young people need it.

Desired Results:

- Young people are economically active and have suitable homes that they can afford - they can build for their future.