

Family and Adolescent Support Team and Child Sexual Exploitation and Prevention Team Operating Protocol

The Family and Adolescent Support Team (FAST) and the Child Sexual Exploitation and Prevention Team (CSEP) are part of the Youth and Family Support Services.

Family and Adolescent Support Team (FAST)

The aim of the Family and Adolescent Support Team (FAST) is to provide a rapid reaction service of early help and support to vulnerable 11 to 17 year olds on the cusp of care, and their families, and this aligns with the Council's Early Help Strategy. The team consists of social workers and a team manager with the capacity to undertake intensive work with families for up to 9 months, principally using the team around the child/team around the family casework model. The aim is to build family resilience and improve parenting in order to keep young people out of the care system.

Building resilience

The family and adolescent support work undertaken in FAST supports young people who have experienced family breakdown which has resulted in the young person becoming homeless or on the edge of care. Support is given to homeless or vulnerably housed young people aged 16 to 17 by seeking to reunite them with their families, thus enabling them to return to, or remain in, the family home. They also work with young people aged 11 to 17, and their families, by offering intensive support and mediation to prevent them from entering the care system.

The cornerstone of the service will be highly skilled assessments and case planning carried out by qualified social workers with the capacity to undertake intensive work with families, principally using the team around the child/team around the family casework model. Coupled with professional mediation intervention is aimed at building resilience and improving parenting to prevent entry or re-entry into the care system.

The FAST team have reduced caseloads (maximum 12) to give staff the time and consistency to build these relationships and ensure the young person has the same key worker for the whole period of support. This also enables the young people to feel secure, knowing that they can continue to get help from a service, on their terms, even when other circumstances change - a 'no wrong door' service for adolescents.

Child Sexual Exploitation Prevention (CSEP) Team

The CSEP Team works closely with other providers within the borough, including statutory social care, Police, Enfield Safeguarding Children Board, schools and other teams within Youth and Family Support Services (YFSS), amongst others, to prevent the sexual exploitation of children within the borough. The team is responsible for working with all young people identified as being at risk of CSE in Enfield, and includes offering information and advice to other services, working within the early help framework, undertaking section 47 investigations and managing child protection plans as appropriate.

The CSEP team consists of social workers who manage the more complex child sexual exploitation cases, whilst the youth workers manage those young people whose cases are not deemed as complex. The youth workers are also responsible for awareness raising in schools and youth centres. The team is managed by a qualified social worker.

Principles underpinning the protocol

The safety and welfare of the young person is paramount.

This protocol reflects the government guidance *'Provision of Accommodation for 16 and 17 year old young people who may be homeless and/or require accommodation'*, issued in 2010 following the House of Lords 2009 judgment in the case of *G v LB Southwark*.

The primary objective of the protocol is to promote and safeguard the wellbeing of the young person and to prevent homelessness or entering or remaining in the care system, returning young people to their family wherever possible. If a return home is not possible, the objective is to find the most suitable accommodation for the young person and to support them to remain in, and move on from, their accommodation when appropriate.

Process for accommodating young people.

Unless there is clear evidence to the contrary, the starting point will be that all children and young people are generally best supported to live with their immediate families. Every effort should be made therefore to mediate between young people and their families to negotiate a return home wherever possible.

Where young people are unable or unwilling to return to their immediate families, young people should be supported to explore wider family members and community options where their needs can be met.

Young people will be kept informed of progress and decisions made and will be fully engaged in their assessment and plans.

Agencies will work together to assess and meet the needs of these young people and share information effectively.

Whilst it is recognised that Bed and Breakfast accommodation is not suitable for 16-17 year olds, in some emergency circumstances young people will need to be accommodated in Bed and Breakfast accommodation in order to prevent street homelessness. These arrangements, however, will be exceptional, only used as a last resort to prevent street homelessness, and will be short term.

Where there is a concern that the child may need to be looked after by the local authority, the FAST team support families to explore some of the problems that exist, and to make changes so that the young person can remain at home or within the family environment.

The FAST will signpost young people and their families to other services that offer support on emotional health and wellbeing, drugs and alcohol, sexual health and education.

FAST and CSEP referrals

Referrals into FAST are from a number of routes. Where young people's cases are being managed by qualified social workers the practice on all cases will be in accordance and compliance with the Departmental Children's Services Procedures Manual. This can be found on Enfield Eye, team areas, schools and children's services. Or by clicking the link: [Enfield Children's Services Manual](#)

All young people aged 11 to 17 who are at risk of sexual exploitation and are not open to qualified social worker are referred to CSEP from the SPOE (Single Point of Entry), where their level of need for intervention is assessed.

Referrals are received from the SPOE where the threshold for statutory safeguarding intervention has not been met, yet the child is at risk of family breakdown. Referrals can come from other internal children's social care teams, including Cheviots, Referral and Assessment Team and the Child Protection and Family Support Team: where the child is not subject to a CP plan and the young person and their family require intensive support services to prevent family breakdown and potentially the young person becoming homeless/entering care.

If a young person has an allocated key worker from the Youth Offending Unit (YOU), the key worker, wherever possible, will access mediation services to prevent homelessness as soon as the risk of homelessness is identified.

Young people can self-refer within working hours to the service if they are threatened with homelessness or are street homeless.

Referrals for young people aged 11 to 17 years need to meet one primary and at least two of the secondary criteria listed below to be eligible for support:

Primary criteria:

- at risk of family breakdown and young person coming into care;
- 16/17 year old presenting as homeless;
- at risk of, or experiencing, sexual exploitation.

Secondary criteria:

- secondary school attendance below 85%;
- two or more fixed term exclusions;
- attends the Pupil Referral Unit;
- not in education, training or employment for 3 months and over;
- high risk young offender;
- one or more episodes of involvement with children's social care services in the last year;
- one or more incidents of domestic violence in the last year;
- one or more missing persons reports in the last year;
- identified as being associated with gang activity;
- experiencing severe emotional difficulties.

All young people presenting as homeless will be:

- expected to cooperate with the assessment process over a maximum of 35 working days
- given a copy of the homeless young people pack containing information and advice including a copy of the FASH Charter and the Council complaints procedures;
- asked about their general health and asked if they know where to access advice and assistance with sexual health;
- asked about their personal relationships including parents, partners and peers;
- expected to be involved with the family mediation services during their assessment period;
- expected to sign up to a charter outlining the duties and responsibilities of the FAST and the expectations of the young person. This gives particular regard to taking responsibility for their behaviour with an understanding that should they be evicted from accommodation provided by the FAST because of their or their friends' behaviour they are at risk of not being offered further accommodation;
- informed about information sharing and data retention explicitly via the Charter.
- All young people will be given the opportunity to provide feedback on the service they receive.

Pregnant 16/17 young people

All pregnant 16/17 year olds at 24 weeks' gestation and over, who have not already entered supported housing, that present to the FAST, will be referred to John Wilkes House (JWH), following the usual statutory checks, e.g. checks to see if the young person was previously known and open to Children's Services, including previous inclusion of the CP register or previously LAC, which will give some indication of their likely vulnerability. Contact should be made with the young person's midwife (details on the pregnancy confirmation/hospital letters) and young parents' services if they are known. Enfield Housing have a duty to provide housing assistance to pregnant 16/17 year old young people and make interim arrangements whilst they conduct their enquiries.

If there are identified safeguarding concerns this should initiate a referral to social care in line with procedures as further pre-birth or parental assessments may be required.

Mediation

Mediation will be offered to all young people aged up to 18 years who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. All young people and their families are expected to engage with mediation as a condition of the support they receive from FAST.

Over 18s

Over 18s presenting to FAST, or those who have been evicted from home post 18, should be directed to the John Wilkes House/their webpage (see appendix 6).

Assessments of young people

All referrals of young people accepted into the FAST service will be offered an assessment if a current one (within the last 6 months) does not exist. Where a plan exists the FAST team will implement this whilst keeping it under review.

Young people at risk of child sexual exploitation will be assessed where their level of need will be determined and support offered by a QSW or youth worker once a plan has been agreed.

Sometimes homeless young people may be too vulnerable to be offered supported accommodation from FAST at their first point of contact because their behaviour or needs require more intensive support. For example:

- a history of severe mental ill health or presenting mental ill health;
- a history of significant self-harm or harm to others;
- vulnerable by virtue of serious previous abuse, for example sexual abuse;
- vulnerable because of significant learning disabilities;
- vulnerable because of recent serious physical assault;
- requiring out of borough accommodation.

Within a maximum of 35 days, the allocated social worker will complete a child and family assessment. If the young person has high support needs that cannot be met by the provision of supported accommodation and the young person cannot return home or to family members, approval at Head of Service and/or Assistant Director level will be sought to accommodate the young person under s.20 CA1989. This decision will be ratified at the next placement panel and funding agreed. The social worker will work in collaboration with other statutory agencies such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), Youth Offending Unit (YOU) and Joint Service for Disabled Children (JSDC).

In any event, when a young person is to be offered supported accommodation (or become looked after) a child and family assessment must be completed within the stipulated timescales to identify the young person's need and their need for accommodation and the outcomes identified for the

child with a plan for the young person and their family to support an eventual return home where this is safe and achieve the other identified outcomes. The plan will include identifying the agencies who will be a part of the support plan and their role, which will necessarily include the keyworker, if the young person has been placed in supported accommodation. The plan will be reviewed within agreed timescales.

Youth Offending

If a young offender has recently been evicted from supported accommodation as a direct result of their behaviour, it is important that their YOU key worker works in partnership with the FAST to ascertain the level of risk, with particular emphasis upon whether or not living independently is a viable, sustainable option. In these circumstances the FAST may only be able to offer short term emergency accommodation while further assessments are carried out. In some situations there may be no further long term accommodation offered from the FAST.

The Youth Offending Unit will be expected to continue to support the young person through the transition. It is important that there is a robust youth offending package of support in place, otherwise the young person is unlikely to manage to live independently within supported accommodation.

In some instances, Young Offenders who are due to be released from a Youth Offender's Institution are deemed to be at risk of homelessness. The FAST must be informed of these cases as soon as possible, preferably at the point the local agencies, primarily YOU, are informed of the release date. The High Intervention Team in YOU will identify and refer young people who have received a custodial sentence that have difficult relationships with their family for mediation via the process used in the FAST team. The mediation worker will then aim to meet the young person at their midway custodial review to begin the engagement and work around mediation for them and their families.

Non-engagement

Non engagement is where one or more of the following occur:

- a client fails to enable necessary contact (for example, missing appointments);
- parent refusing to allow access to the home of the young person;
- a client fails to complete welfare benefit claims or renewals;
- a client fails to engage or attend agreed meetings with external referrals;
- disguised compliance where a client appears to co-operate without carrying out actions or enabling them to be effective;
- a client has repeated explanations for non-attendance (for example, forgot to attend, clerical errors, was unwell, problems with transport);
- threats of violence or other intimidations towards practitioners.

Consideration needs to be given to determining why the client has stopped engaging with the service. For example, domestic abuse, gang involvement, CSE and missing, or it may be that the young people and their families find it easier to work with some practitioners than others.

There is a risk of "drift" setting in before non-engagement is identified and action taken. If letters are ignored, or appointments not kept, weeks can pass without practitioner contact with the young person or their family. If the service user fails to undertake or support necessary actions, this should be monitored and the impact regularly evaluated by the manager and consideration given what are the complicating factors and what needs to change with given timescales.

Good records must be kept, in line with the departmental recording procedures. Staff must raise with their line manager when contact is not maintained. Non-engagement increases the concerns around risk for the child and family until properly understood the reasons for non-engagement.

The responsibilities of the young person and expectations to engage

It should be noted that to engage with the support offered by FASH is voluntary. The FASH will provide every young person with a copy of the Charter which outlines the responsibilities of the FASH as well as the expectations of the young person. This includes the expectation, when support is requested, to engage with support workers, respecting others including staff, and dealing with conflict or difficulties that arise in the appropriate way.

FRASST will ensure that all service users not only receive a written copy of the Charter but that this is verbally explained to them, taking into account their needs and capacity to understand.

Young people and their family's involvement with the FASH service is voluntary. The process of the non-engagement notification should be explained at the beginning of the assessment period so that they are aware from the outset that their action could lead to a delay in an assessment for housing support or case closure. The Social Worker should explore reasons for non-engagement in a supportive way. The young person should be given the opportunity to re-engage when they have not attended as appointment and several attempts have been made to contact them.

Re-presentation post case closure

Where a young person's case is closed and they re-present to the FAST with a homelessness need, specific work needs to be completed with the young person to help them learn from the process and to encourage them to engage. Depending on the circumstances a variety of responses may be required:

- Re-attempts at reintegrating the young person home with mediation support might be an option.
- Young people should be encouraged to engage with floating support, where required, whilst further housing options are explored and the assessment completed.
- Re-offer any support services to the young person that may be of benefit to them.

Timescales for social work involvement

- The time limit for involvement of the social worker will be dependent on the plan developed following the assessment of identified need. To keep plans on course to ensure that they are progressing as planned and achieving the outcomes identified, they must be reviewed regularly and with a frequency of no less than every 6 weeks. The review should include the young person, any significant family members and the professionals involved. Frequently plans need to change to take into account new circumstances, however these can only be identified through the use of regular reviews.
- Where finance is being provided to support the young person in a supported accommodation placement, the case cannot be closed. The social worker will work with the accommodation provider to ensure that the young person has made an application for benefits to pay for the rent on their accommodation and any support costs where possible.
- If it appears that benefits will not be in place by the time the young person reaches their 18th birthday, this must be discussed as soon as possible with the responsible team manager.
- Once a young person becomes 18 years old, they will no longer have statutory social work support unless they have a disability. However as part of the plan they may still receive support from other services, e.g. youth support services and Change and Challenge.
- Other young people may receive support from other services in Children's Social Care if they are made subject of a child protection plan or become Looked After with a long term plan to remain in the care of the Local Authority or has a disability. In these circumstances the

young person's case will be transferred to the appropriate team, using the usual internal transfer criteria and procedures.