SO... WHAT ABOUT Accommodation?

A guide for Wandsworth care leavers

Wandsworth Council

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SO WHAT ABOUT ACCOMMODATION?

Housing and Accommodation is one of the most complicated and important parts of a young person's Pathway Plan and this guide is here to help you understand your options as a Care Experienced Young Person in Wandsworth.

There's lots of myths out there and we know that this guide won't answer all of your questions. The best places to get information are the people who are supporting you like your carers, your PA, our specialist Housing Team in Future First called Future House, your Social Worker and your IRO. Future House has specialist workers to help you through every step of your housing journey.

What is important to understand is what the phrase 'Settled Accommodation' means. People used to talk about 'permanent accommodation', 'my permanent Council Flat' or 'my permanent flat'- you need to know that this does not exist anymore. The phrase that we use now is 'SETTLED ACCOMMODATION'.

We hope this leaflet helps you to start to understand the options that you have- the key thing is to ask as many questions as you can!

All the best

Future House and Future First

WHERE DO WE START?

- **Your Housing and Accommodation journey** starts with you learning how to do all the basic life skills that you will need, while you are still Looked After. Learning how to wash your clothes, cook, clean, budget your money and manage yourself safely while you have carers and keyworkers around to help you is important. Don't miss a chance to get those skills nailed!! You should be able to wash your own clothes, save for things that you want and cook at least one meal before you turn 16!
- **HAVE YOUR SAY!!** Your Pathway Plan is YOUR plan. If you don't take part in reviewing it, how will people know what accommodation you are aiming for when you turn 18? Your Pathway Plan is the most important tool to get to where you want to be so use it!
- **Come to Click,** ClickPlus and our Future House online drop ins to talk to staff and other young people about the reality of living independently.
- **You should get a PA (Personal Advisor)** from Future First on or around your 16th Birthday. Your PA will be supporting you as you make the journey into adulthood so start talking to them now about what your options are and what you want to do.
- **Make sure you have ID!** Get your passport, Provisional License and any other Photo ID that you can BEFORE you turn 17. Have it ready, keep it safe because you will need it!
- **Don't take other people's word for it -** go and visit! Ask your PA and your Social Worker to take you to see some of the accommodation options long before you need to make any decisions. This is too big a part of your life to just take other people's word for it- go and see if for yourself.
- **Future First** run a Life Skills Course and there's a booklet for you to complete too. This amazing course is for all 16+ Young People and you should aim to complete it before you turn 18. Not done it yet? Talk to your PA.

And finally...

DON'T BE IN A HURRY TO LEAVE

Sadly, the majority of young people who rush to move out at 18 find things a real struggle.

THE BIG 5

These are the 5 biggest questions that Young People have asked us about Housing and Accommodation. Please don't forget that your PA **(Personal Advisor)** from Future First, your Social Worker, your Carers and the people around you that you trust will be supporting you and can answer any questions that you have!

1 HOW WILL I PAY MY RENT AFTER I TURN 18? WHAT WILL I LIVE ON?

When you turn 18, whatever sort of Accommodation you are living in can be paid for in one of these ways:

- If you are not working, if you are at College or if you are only working a few hours a week, you should be able to claim benefits that will pay your rent. This will be:
  - **Housing Benefit** if you are living somewhere where you get support from somebody like a Keyworker, a support service or a carer or where your tenancy agreement has 'Supported' in the title
  - **Universal Credit** Housing Element if you are living somewhere where you do not get any sort of support and where your tenancy agreement does not have 'supported' in the title.
- If you are working more than a few hours or if you have got over £16,000 in your bank account, you will probably be expected to pay your own rent from your wages or from your savings.

Scan for more information

Take a look here for more information about Housing Benefit and Universal Credit

This handy website does a benefit calculator for you

THE BIG 5

1 CONTINUED

Each week, you will be expected to buy your food, pay your service charges or gas/electric bills and pay for all of the things you need (clothes, phone bill, travel, socialising, toiletries) from your Universal Credit or your wages if you are working. Universal Credit is only £311.68 per month (April 2024) and from that, you need to be able to afford everything that you need. It's a really hard thing to do! Your Pathway Plan is designed to help you budget and your PA and Social Worker should be helping you to get these skills nailed before you turn 18.

To claim any of these benefits You will need your bank account details, National Insurance Number and Photo ID (Passport/Home Office ID Card/Travel Document/provisional license).

2 IS IT TRUE THAT THE BEST FLATS GO TO THE PEOPLE WITH GOOD RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEIR WORKERS?

There is a myth that young people are 'chosen' for particular Settled flats or properties. The reality is that nobody 'chooses'- there are waiting lists and it is a case of whatever property becomes available when your name reaches the top of the list, that is the Settled Accommodation that you are offered.

This means that you might get a large studio flat with a garden BUT your mate might get a smaller studio flat on the 12th floor. Your mate might be jealous, but the truth is that it is just sheer luck. What you must do is turn whatever you get offered, into a nice home for yourself.

This guide will explain to you what Accommodation options are out there. When it comes to who gets what Settled Accommodation, there is no choosing, there is no special treatment or rewards- it is just down to chance. All you can do is make the very best of the Settled home that you are offered.

REMEMBER:

Single people applying for Housing in Wandsworth are currently offered Studios-. Be prepared to be offered a studio flat- you cannot turn it down simply because you 'want' a one-bedroom property.

3 IF I DON'T LIKE THE FLAT THAT THE COUNCIL OFFER ME IN THE FUTURE, I CAN JUST TURN IT DOWN YEAH?

Wandsworth Council operate a 'One Offer Policy'. Unless the property is in a dangerous or really bad structural state (that does not include cosmetic issues like dirty paintwork or broken cupboards/windows), **if you turn down the offer of a 'suitable property', you can be removed from the waiting list for two years**

A property is considered suitable if:

- It's big enough for the number of people in your household and is in an acceptable state for a tenant. If you are a single person, then this means you should expect be offered a studio flat. If you turn a studio flat down because you wanted a 1 bedroom instead, you will be taken off the Housing List for 2 years.
- It's suitable if it's in an area that you said you could live in on your application form. When you fill in the application form you are asked what areas you can live in. You need to tick as many areas as possible but if you are offered a flat somewhere and it was on your list of 'safe areas', you have to take it. You can update your form if your situation changes before you get offered a flat but otherwise, you must accept what you are offered
- It's suitable if there is no serious medical reason why the flat is not suitable. Again, you need to put all important medical information in your application and only the most serious conditions and disabilities are considered.

Once you are contacted by the Housing Department to offer you a property, you must go to see the property (called 'viewing' it). This must be something that you do in person and you should take your PA with you. This viewing will take place within a couple of days of being offered it and you do need to make yourself available to go and see the property. You should be offered at least 24 hours to decide about the property. If you are being pressured to decide on the spot, your PA will support you in ensuring that you get time to decide. Please remember though that you can only turn it down if it is 'unsuitable'- this is explained above.

When you go to see your Settled flat for the first time, your PA will bring a checklist with them of things that need to be working or things that need to be fixed before you move in. However, most flats need painting, decorating, carpeting and 'making nice' when you first see them. You will be turning it into a home after you move in- what you are seeing when you visit is the space itself!

Check out our Pinterest page for ideas on how to make studios feel more spacious.

SO THE SHORT ANSWER IS

No, you cannot just turn down a Settled flat if you don't like it!

4 HOW WILL I AFFORD ALL MY FURNITURE AND CARPETS AND STUFF?

Every young person leaving care has a £3160 Setting up Home Grant that helps to pay for things like carpet, cooker, home security and safety items, fridge freezer, bed and sofa in their Settled Accommodation. However, it's not enough to buy everything. Here are our tips and hints:

- When you leave care, you get given your savings. Do exactly that- SAVE IT!! If you've been Looked After for a long time, those savings could be a lot of money. Furnishing a Settled Flat is expensive- don't waste your savings because you'll regret it!
- Get a part time job! Life is expensive and the only way you will be able to buy all the things you want for your flat is if you start saving money soon. Price up all the things you would want in your dream flat- give yourself a bit of shock at how much it will all cost!
- Future First will pay for one Moving Van for you when you move into your Settled Accommodation- this might help you to collect any things that friends or family can give you for your new place.
- Some Housing Associations offer decorating grants- make sure you ask about this when you go with your PA to view the property.
- Shop smart- second hand is not second best……there are bargains and deals out there. Some of our Young People have got AMAZING stuff from local free sites and if you start looking at those websites now, you will know how to find them when you need them.
- Your PA can help you apply to a few Care Leaver's organisations that do grants for young people. This will help you to buy some of the stuff that your Setting Up Home Grant can't cover.

Scan for more information

Finding Furniture

Chances for children - Buttle UK

Richmond furniture scheme

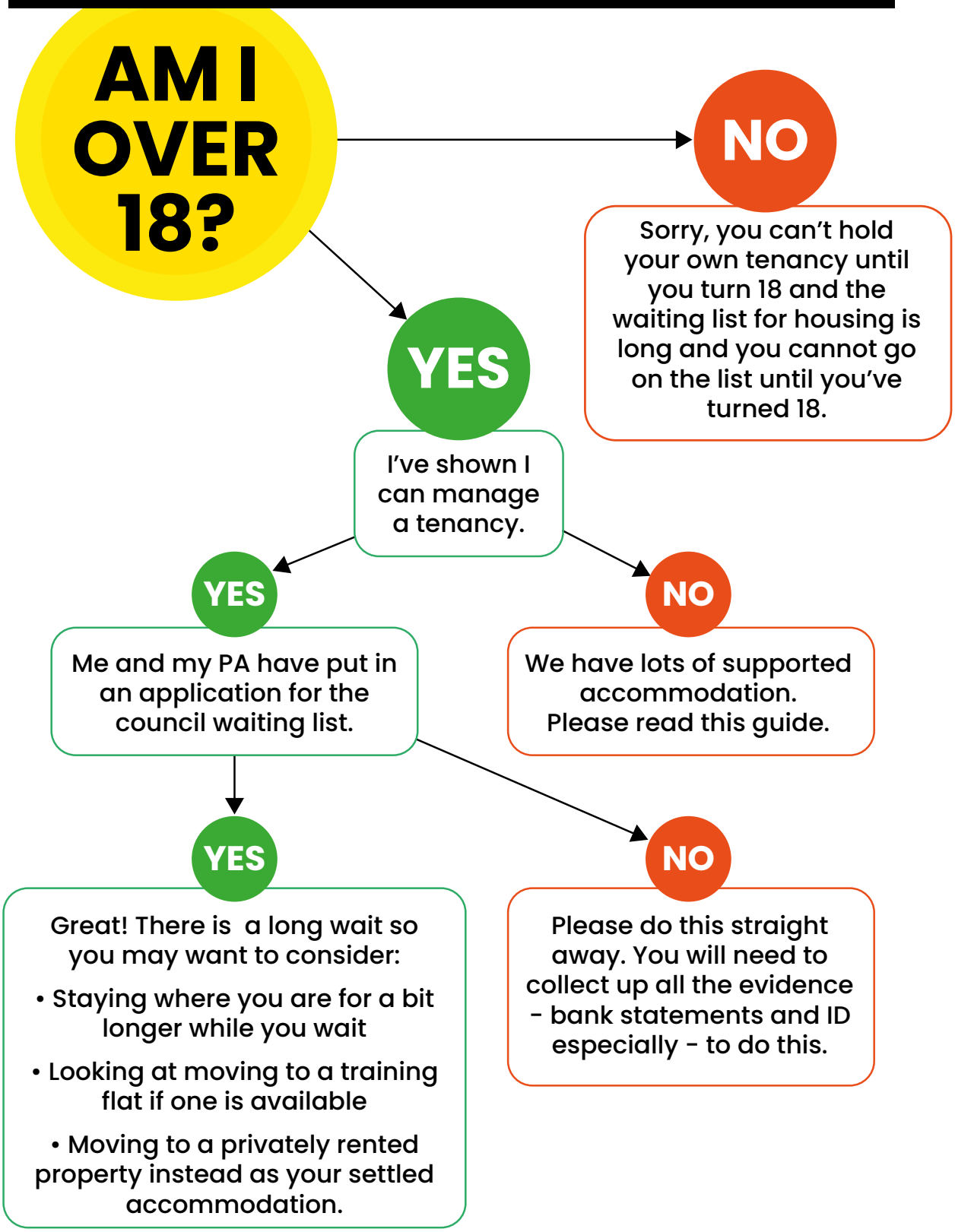
5 WILL I GET MY OWN, SETTLED FLAT ON MY 18TH BIRTHDAY ?

This is the biggest question of them all and the short answer is 'No' for nearly everyone. It's 'no' for a lot of reasons:

- No young person should have to move on the day of their 18th Birthday. 18th Birthdays are for celebrations, relaxing and spending time with the people who care about you. They should NOT be spent moving boxes and settling into a new place. If you are being asked to move on your 18th Birthday, please let your IRO, your Social Worker/their manager or your carers know that this is not acceptable. Show them this leaflet.
- No young person can get onto the Council Waiting list (Called to Social Care Queue for Care Experienced young people) until they turn 18 so you will not get one on your 18th Birthday.
- If you decide that you want to privately rent your own flat, our specialist housing officers can support you to explore this option! They can help you to access things like deposit and rent in advance and if you need a Guarantor, you can apply to our Guarantor scheme. Our Guarantor scheme requires you to complete an assessment but if you are successful, it can be a great way to help you get your own place however most landlords won't rent to anyone until they have turned 18.

The reality is that there is not enough Social Housing to go around. Each year, we only get a set number of properties offered to Care Experienced young people and the waiting list is long. It takes around two years on the waiting list before you get an offer.

What about my own settled accomodation?



I'm 16/17 and I've never lived independently.

What are the potential options when I turn 18?

I'm living with Foster Carers

- I've got friends or family I plan to live with
- University Accommodation
- Supported Accommodation
- Stay Put -This can be for up to three years if I want
- Training Flat
- I can go on the housing waiting list when I am 18 but it takes a long time
- Private Renting

I'm not living with Foster Carers

- I've got friends or family I plan to live with
- Supported Accommodation
- I can go on the housing waiting list when I am 18 but it takes a long time before I am offered a flat
- Where I was living has a semi-independent flat. I can practice being independent after the age of 18.
- University Accommodation

STAYING PUT

If you are living with Foster Carers, we want to encourage every young person to Stay Put with their Foster Carers for as long as possible- right up until they turn 21 if they want it!

The longer you Stay Put, the more likely it is that when you do move out into your Settled Accommodation, you'll have the skills that you need to manage. If you don't have foster carers, we want to support you to make a plan that keeps you close to the people who you know and who have supported you when you were in Care. Sadly, the majority of young people who rush to move on at 18 find things a real struggle.

When you 'Stay Put' you are becoming a tenant in your Foster Carer's home. You are being given more responsibilities and Staying Put means that you:

- Pay for all your own toiletries, clothes, travel, expenses, socialising, clubs and activities yourself.
- You are responsible for paying your rent, via benefits or your wages.
- You should be cooking for yourself wherever possible
- You should be doing all of your own washing and cleaning
- You have to stick to the 'Living Together' arrangements
- You should have shown that you can do every single one of the skills in the 'Life Skills Checklist' by the time your Staying Put arrangement ends and you move into your own Settled Accommodation.

Scan for more information

SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION

In Wandsworth, we have over 100 spaces in supported accommodation projects, flatshares, houses and studios which young people can live while they learn the skills they need to cope in Settled Accommodation.

Supported Accommodation comes in all different shapes and sizes and is spread all over the Borough of Wandsworth. We even have amazing, shared houses in Chessington in Surrey, for young people who don't want to (or can't) live in Wandsworth itself

Centrepoint, Nacro, Ekaya and Future First run these properties. Some of them are High support with staff there 24 hours, some have staff who visit a few times a week, some have Resident Volunteers who actually live in the house/flat with a group of young people to offer them support and some are just a couple of people sharing a flat with floating support. You, your Social Worker and your PA need to work together to decide what level of support you want and need, and which Supported Accommodation is the best one for you.

KEY THINGS TO KNOW:

- The aim of Supported accommodation is to get you ready for your Settled Accommodation! You are expected to work with an allocated keyworker or a resident volunteer to work through the targets in support plan so that you have all the skills you need to move onto your settled accommodation as quickly as possible. If you miss key working sessions without a good reason or if you don't stick to the rules, you will get warning letters and could be evicted.
- You will get a License Agreement or a short-term tenancy agreement which is a contract that lays out the rules and expectations for you.
- You will, in nearly all of these, need to share kitchens, bathrooms and lounges and so it is really important that you understand the rules of the projects so that everyone gets along!
- They are furnished so you won't need to buy furniture
- You have to pay your own rent and you will also need to pay a weekly service charge for electricity/gas, the support you get, water and wifi which can be between £12-18 per week depending on which accommodation you are in. If you don't pay this, you may get evicted.
- You'll get the chance to meet new people and develop friendships with the people that you share with
- There are social events, activities and resident meetings for everyone living in Supported Accommodation.
- You will have your own lockable room and a key for that door.
- You'll have to pay your rent and service charge and if you don't, you may be evicted
- You have to keep your room and the spaces that you use clean and tidy
- You'll have space to store your food and cooking stuff safely
- You'll be cooking for yourself and you will have to budget your money for everything, including your clothes, travel, toiletries, socialising, phone costs and anything else that you normally buy.
- You have to stay at the accommodation at least 4 nights a week. Any less than that, you are breaking your tenancy agreement.

We are developing some more detailed information (videos, brochures and webpages) about all of these properties but in the meantime, PLEASE ask your Social Worker, your Personal Advisor, Future House staff, your carers or anyone else that you trust to take you to visit some of these properties so that you can see what they are like.

SEMI-INDEPENDENT ACCOMMODATION

If you haven't been living with foster carers before you turn 18, we want to support you to make a plan that aims to keep you close to the people who you know and who have supported you when you were in Care, while you build up your independence skills to get you ready for Settled Accommodation.

KEY THINGS TO KNOW

- Semi-Independent accommodation is accommodation which is often outside of Wandsworth Borough and is often run by private companies or Residential Children's Homes.
- They are often flats, rooms or bedsits where a support worker keeps an eye on you and help you to build up your skills.
- They are furnished so you won't need to buy furniture
- You will have your own lockable room and a key for that door.
- You will be expected to pay some of your rent and there may well be a service charge which is between £12-30 a week depending on what facilities are in the accommodation. If you don't pay those charges, you may be evicted.
- You will need to work with your PA and review your Pathway Plan. If you don't use the support that it being offered to you, you might lose your place.
- You should be prepared to share a bathroom, kitchen and lounge with other residents as not many semi-independent accommodations have private bathrooms or kitchens.

TRAINING FLATS

Future First have a small number of Training Flats, where Young People can 'test out' their skills before moving on to Settled Accommodation. We only have a few of these flats and they are popular. If a Training Flat is something that you want to have offered to you, it needs to be in your Pathway Plan and it needs to be planned well in advance!

KEY THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TRAINING FLATS:

- They are furnished
- You are responsible for paying your rent, service charge and gas/electric/water bills
- You aren't able to decorate a Training Flat
- You have to stick to your tenancy agreement and if you don't, you may be asked to leave the training flat and go back into Supported Accommodation.

SETTLED ACCOMMODATION

What is really important to understand is what the word 'Settled Accommodation' means. People used to talk about 'permanent accommodation', 'my permanent council Flat' or 'my permanent flat'- you need to know that this does not exist any more. The phrase that we use now is **'Settled Accommodation'.**

'Settled Accommodation' comes in four different forms

1. Council owned and managed
2. Housing Association owned and managed properties
3. Privately Rented Accommodation.
4. Owner Occupier (where you have a Mortgage and own all or part of the property)

As a Care Experienced Young Person, the council can offer you these types of Accommodation as your Settled Accommodation

1 COUNCIL OWNED AND MANAGED ACCOMMODATION

Every Council has a Housing Waiting List. Lists come in lots of different shapes and sizes but all of them will not let you 'put your name' on the list until you have actually turned 18.

In Wandsworth, we have a special, priority list for Care Experienced Young People. This is called The Social Care Queue (SCQ). Even though this list makes Care Experienced Young People a priority, it can still be a long wait before you get offered anything. It can be anything up to 2/3 years sometimes (2 bedroom properties for parents with children are the longest wait). This is because we have nearly 500 young people that we support and the Council only allocate us a set number of properties each year- once those properties have been offered to our Care Leavers, we get no more in that year. This is why it's a long wait sometimes and why it's important that every young person looks at all the options that they have for Settled Accommodation and not just focus on the SCQ

To get on the Social Care Queue (SCQ), you must have proved that you are a good tenant who pays their bills and sticks to the rules. You need to provide your ID, a photo, your bank statements and proof of income. Your Personal Advisor must include your completed Life Skills Booklet, a Risk Assessment and a Support Plan for your Social Care Queue application to go through. If you have not provided all of your documents, shown that you can pay your bills and be a good tenant, the Housing Department won't allow you onto the SCQ.

The Settled Accommodation that the council offer from the SCQ can be:

- Studio flats. What you are offered depends completely on what flat becomes available when you get to the top of the list. The Housing Department in the council are the ones who decide which properties are available to offer and who is next on the list.
- Two or three bedroom properties are only available for Parents who have children that are already born and who have a Birth Certificate - you won't get a two bedroom property if you are still pregnant.
- Most Wandsworth council properties are in High Rise Blocks
- Council tenants are usually given an introductory tenancy, which is like a trial tenancy that runs for a year. During this trial year, introductory tenants can be evicted if they do not keep to the conditions of their tenancy agreement.
- After the first year, providing the tenancy has been maintained with no problems, you will be offered a flexible fixed term tenancy. The duration of a flexible fixed term tenancy can be between two and five years. After this period your housing circumstances will be reviewed again to assess whether you still need social housing.

Scan for more information

Once your name is on the SCQ you can track your progress on the queue here

QUESTION:

How does the decision get made that I am ready for Settled Accommodation via the SCQ?

That is pretty simple really- your Pathway Plan! You, your Personal Advisor and all of the people who support you should be working together to make sure that all of the targets in your plan are on track, including things like paying your rent and sticking by the rules. As soon as you have shown that you have done the following:

- Not have built up rent arrears or service charge debts
- Shown that you are able to manage your money and take care of yourself (cooking, cleaning, staying healthy and safe)
- Have done the Life Skills course
- Stick to the rules of your tenancy agreement

Once you have completed your application form and provided your ID and your documents, your PA will invite you to SCQ Panel where you can talk to Housing about your application and hear the decision about whether your application is approved.

Scan for more information

If you are interested, these web pages tell you more about the Housing Waiting List in Wandsworth

This is a long document but you might find it interesting The Housing Allocation Scheme

QUESTION:

What if my PA and Keyworker don't think I'm ready to go on the SCQ but I feel like I am and I don't want to wait?

If you want to go on the SCQ Waiting list but the people supporting you don't think you are ready to go on the SCQ, you can still go onto the **General Needs Housing List** in Wandsworth. This does not give you the same priority status as Care Experienced Young Person as the SCQ does but you are able to put your application in whenever as long as you meet the criteria.

This list is a really long one and it can take many years to be housed. Our advice would be: If people don't think you're ready for the SCQ, put all your energy into proving them wrong while you stay where you are!

Don't feel your voice is being heard about being ready for your own place at 18+? Speak first of all to your PA but if you still don't feel it's sorted, speak to their Manager (their contact details are in your Pathway Plan).

You can also contact **Advocacy People** on **0330 440 9000**
or email **info@theadvocacypeople.org.uk**
or visit **www.theadvocacypeople.org.uk**

Scan for more information

Apply to join the housing waiting list

Scan for more information

Wandsworth Council Housing Waiting lists

Types of Accommodation and Tenancies

This is a long document but you might find it interesting

2 HOUSING ASSOCIATION OWNED AND MANAGED PROPERTIES

Through the SCQ, the Council can offer you settled accommodation in a home which is owned by something called a Housing Association.

If you get a Housing Association home, it means your landlord is not the Council, it's the Housing Association. Some big Housing Associations that you may have heard of are London and Quadrant, Peabody Trust, Wandle, Metropolitan Thames Valley, Southern Housing.

Scan for more information

What is a housing association?

The types of Tenancies and Accommodation

3 PRIVATE RENTED ACCOMMODATION

20% of all households in the UK rent their homes from Private Landlords compared to only 17% who live in Social Housing. Private Rented properties are flats and houses which landlords own and rent out to other people.

With private renting, the properties are advertised and you can choose where you live (take a look at **www.zoopla.co.uk** to see what sort of properties are available to rent in the area that you want to live). It's down to the landlords and letting agents who they rent the properties to but you have a choice about what areas and type of property you want to rent, which is the benefit of private renting.

The Local Housing Allowance (known as the LHA) tells you the maximum rent that benefits will pay for in any area, and it varies from area to area (London is the most expensive place to rent in the UK!).

Future First have a Guarantor Scheme and dedicated support from Future House to help you find and secure properties as well as accessing Deposits and rent in advance from the Council. This is the support that Wandsworth Council offers with people who want to find Privately Rented accommodation.

Even if you are working, you may be eligible for top up benefits if you are on a low income and there may be some grants that you can access. **Get Support - Turn2us**

Scan for more information

Local housing allowance

Information about the Benefits Cap

Financial assistance to pay the rent of deposit

Turn2us

KEY THINGS TO KNOW

- Private rented properties come Furnished or unfurnished. Furnished flats mean that you don't need to buy yourself a bed, sofa or kitchen appliances- this means you can save a lot of your Setting Up Home Grant!
- London is the most expensive place in the UK to privately rent. If you look outside London, even if it's just outside London, you'll see that it's noticeably cheaper
- You can rent whole houses that you then share with friends. If you have a couple of friends who you would like to live with, you might want to consider renting a two or three bedroom property together as it would potentially be cheaper.
- Flats come and go quickly- if you are interested in a property you have to move pretty fast and although your PA and Future House can advise and help you, you will still need to do a lot of work yourself.
- Private renting is complicated and although there is help available from the Council with Deposits and Rent in advance, you may still need a guarantor, especially if you are not working. Future First offer a Guarantor Scheme but you need to apply for this and be approved. Information about this scheme is available on our Website or through your PA.
- If you use funds from Wandsworth Council (this includes anything from the Rent Deposit Scheme or funds from Housing/Future First) to secure your private property, you are likely to be considered to be in your settled accommodation and you will be removed from the Social Care Queue if you were previously on it.

Scan for more information

Private Renting

Private housing tenants

QUESTION:

But everyone says that I shouldn't privately rent because it's not secure?

- Council Tenancies are not always 'Homes For Life'- tenancies get reviewed and if you don't need social housing any more, you can see your tenancy ended
- Private renting allows you to choose location and layout- with Social Housing, you get one offer and you have to take it.
- Private renting allows you to move areas or live somewhere other than Wandsworth
- Private renting can be more expensive but as long as it's within the LHA rate, you may be able to claim benefits to support those costs, especially if you are not earning a huge amount.
- Neighbours annoying? Fallen out of love with the area? If you rent privately, you can move more easily than you can if you are in social housing.

4 OWNING YOUR OWN PROPERTY

Some Young People leaving care are working full-time and they want to own their own home.

This is an amazing thing to work towards. To be able to get a Mortgage (the loan that you need to buy a home) you need to be working, with a contract that you have had for at least 6 months and earning enough money to afford the mortgage.

Scan for more information

Buying your own home - helpful guides

UNIVERSITY ACCOMMODATION

Going to University is an amazing experience!

Your Uni, your Personal Advisor and the Virtual School will support you to plan for your accommodation but you will need to make sure that you can afford it and we do recommend that you secure accommodation that lasts for 52 weeks a year where you can. University is an exciting opportunity but planning is key!

University Accommodation comes in all shapes and sizes- we can't cover them all here. These are the really important things:

- If you are going to study somewhere that you can't travel to from where you are living now, you will need to leave your accommodation and move to accommodation nearer where you are studying. This is a big deal and so you need to start planning early using your Pathway Plan!
- The Law says that Leaving Care Services need to pay for Student's Vacation Accommodation. This means that for the Summer and Christmas Breaks (Easter isn't counted as a Vacation), Future First will definitely pay your rent OR provide you with somewhere to stay. This is up to 21 weeks of the year.
- You need to make sure that you have applied for all of your Student Finance so that you can pay for your accommodation when you need to
- Some Universities offer amazing deals for Care Experienced Young People, some of which include free Accommodation! Speak to your Virtual School worker about these Uni's BEFORE you make your applications so that you know what's on offer!
- You also get a £2000 Uni Bursary from Future First which can go towards things like deposits etc for your accommodation at Uni.
- You're definitely advised to get weekend and vacation jobs whilst a student, so that you can pay for your accommodation costs if you need to. It helps to boost your CV and will give you much needed income whilst you study!

FRIENDS AND FAMILY

We know that every single Care Experienced young person has their own journey and experiences. .

We also know that for some young people when they turn 18, they make the decision to return to live with family or to live with their friends or partners. We will never 'tell' you what to do but we do want to help you make a decision that is right for you. If this is your plan, we will offer you something called a Life Long Links meeting before you turn 18, so that you and your family/friends can plan exactly how you will support each other in this new arrangement. Your PA and your Social Worker will also help you to work out exactly how you will financially support yourself if you decide to choose this option.

Living with friends and family comes with its own pressures and challenges. Your PA and Future House will always be able to advise you on your options, if things don't work out as you'd hoped.

BUT WHAT IF I DON'T WANT TO LIVE IN WANDSWORTH WHEN I LEAVE CARE?

We know that some of you have been living in places away from Wandsworth and that some of you want to stay in that area when you leave care.

We also know that for some Young People, coming back to Wandsworth isn't an option because of personal reasons. We want to help you to live in a place where you are happy and safe.

Once you are on any sort of Social Housing Waiting list (that could be the SCQ, it might be the Homeless Persons Queue or a waiting list in another area), you can actually apply for properties all over the country via Homefinder UK.

This is a really good option for young people who do not want to live in London. .

WHAT ARE YOUR OPTIONS?

- Your Pathway Plan should be clear about what is happening when you turn 18. Are you Staying Put with foster carers? Does your current accommodation have a Semi-Independent option that you can move to? Is there a Supported Accommodation option in your local area? All these things should be clearly worked out in your Pathway Plan before you are 17 and a half AT THE LATEST. If they're not, you need to let your IRO and your Social Worker know that you are not clear about what your options are.
- If you have specific health or wellbeing needs, this may place you in a priority group or you may be able to access support from Adults Social Care
- If you have lived in another area for more than 2 years, some of which was before you turned 16, you have a Local Connection with that area and you are entitled to Settled Housing there. This means that you can go on that area's Housing Waiting List. Every area has a waiting list and so it won't happen quickly but it does mean that you are entitled to be on the list.
- Use Homefinder UK to see if there are properties in other areas that you like.
- If you don't want to live in Wandsworth because you don't feel safe, Housing Departments will need evidence of this, before they offer to help you live somewhere else. Evidence is things like Police Reports, reports from Youth Offending Teams or Probation, letters of support from Domestic Abuse organisations as well as supporting evidence from your Future First PA. Unfortunately, if you do not have enough evidence that you are actually unsafe, you won't be seen as a priority for Housing Departments to help. Your PA will help you to work out what areas are safer than others and where in the Borough you might be able live, if you can't get accommodation anywhere else.
- For some young people who live outside of Wandsworth, privately renting your Settled Home in another area might be your only option if you don't need Supported Accommodation or Semi-Independent accommodation. It will be important that you plan this with your PA and the people that you trust so that the process is successful. You will need to see what financial help your local Council give for people wanting to Privately Rent.

Scan for more information

Homefinder UK

YOUNG PEOPLE WHO DON'T HAVE THEIR IMMIGRATION STATUS YET

For those Young People who don't yet have status from the Home Office, Future First will continue to pay for your Accommodation until you get a decision from The Home Office

Even though Future First pay your rent while you have no Status, you are still responsible for paying your service charges from your weekly allowances.

You need to make sure that you use your Pathway Plan to work out what you want to happen when you turn 18 and where you would like to live. You have exactly the same options as other young people in terms of:

- Staying Put
- Supported Accommodation
- Semi-independent Accommodation
- Private Renting
- Living with Friends or Family
- University Accommodation

The big difference though is that if you don't have Leave to Remain in the UK yet, you cannot get Settled Council or Housing Association Accommodation. It's really hard but you cannot get that accommodation until you are given Leave to Remain in the UK.

For those Young People who sadly do not get a positive decision from the Home Office, Future First will support you to have a Human Rights Assessment and depending on what that assessment says, your accommodation may continue to be funded by Future First or you may be referred to the National Asylum Support Service (NASS).

ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS FOR YOUNG PARENTS

In Wandsworth, we have several Supported Accommodation options for young parents

Centrepoint and Ekaya run properties for us in which single, female parents can live in shared flats with other young parents while they build the skills they need to manage Settled Accommodation

If you are a single male parent, we will offer to provide you with an equivalent option but we need you to make sure that your Pathway Plan tells us what you need.

KEY THINGS TO KNOW:

- If you live in Parent and Child Supported Accommodation, you have got to stay there for 4 nights a week and partners are not able to stay overnight
- Settled 2 bedroomed accommodation from Wandsworth Council has a very long waiting list. These properties are popular and there are not enough of them so the waiting time can be years.
- Private renting may be an option that Parents have to consider if they wish to live with their partner OR if they need accommodation quickly. Again, your Pathway Plan is the best place to start to plan for this and please look at the Private Rented section for some advice.
- Parents at University can access family accommodation from some Universities and this needs to be part of the planning that is done if you are going to Uni.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THINGS GO WRONG?

In life, we know that things don't always go to plan. Leaving Care is really challenging and stressful time and we know that sometimes, people make mistakes and they need help to get back on track.

The three things that lead to problems in accommodation are:

- Not Paying your rent and service charges
- Not abiding by the rules or expectations of your tenancy agreement (called 'breaching your tenancy')
- Behaving in a way that causes concern or upset for your neighbours or staff, or behaving in a way which is illegal

Everyone makes mistakes- that's absolutely fine and we are here to support you with those. What's more important is making sure that you show you're serious about changing your behaviour when you've made those mistakes.

Your Personal Advisor is there to help you to put it right when things go wrong! So are your keyworkers or support staff and so are the other people in your life.

If however, you aren't able to do the things you need to to fix it, you may end up being asked to leave (often referred to as being evicted). If this happens and there are no other options, the final option may be to tell your Local Housing Department that you are Homeless

There are lots of laws about how Council's should support Homeless Care Leavers and here in Wandsworth, the Homeless Persons Unit (HPU) is the place that we refer Homeless young people to when we cannot find any other options.

If the Council assesses that you need accommodation because you are Homeless, they will offer you temporary accommodation in whatever location they can find some. Because it is really hard to find accommodation in London, a lot of the HPU accommodation is outside Wandsworth Borough and it can be as far as Essex, Kent or further North of London.

Your PA will continue to support you no matter where your accommodation is but we will keep trying to get you back into Supported Accommodation where we can.

If you are in Temporary accommodation provided by HPU, you are automatically placed on a different waiting list for Settled Accommodation and people normally have to wait about 2 years in Temporary Accommodation before they get their Settled Accommodation.

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WHAT HAPPENS THEN?

What is the situation	What are your options	What's plan B if that doesn't work
You've been evicted from Supported or Semi-Independent Accommodation	- We would see if you could move to a different supported accommodation option with higher support - If you have an Education and Health Care Plan (called an EHCP) we will go to Care panel and see if there are options for higher levels of support for you to help you get on track - We may ask you if there are any friends or family that you can stay with while we sort out options	Your PA and Future House would support you to access the Homeless Persons Unit (HPU) in the area that you are living
Your Staying Put arrangement/ University Accommodation/ staying with Friends or Family has broken down	- We would see if we could get you a place in Supported Accommodation to support you to get ready for Settled Accommodation - If you are already on the SCQ Waiting list, we would see if you could be housed as a priority - If there is a Training flat available, we would look at that. - If Privately renting is an option for you, we would look at that - We would ask you if there are any friends or family that you can stay with while we sort out options - We will see if there is a Housing Association property that we can offer you	Your PA and Future House would support you to access the Homeless Persons Unit (HPU) in the area that you are living
You are coming out of Prison or police custody and you have lost your accommodation while you have been there	- We would look at which Supported Accommodation Options are available for you - We would look at what Housing Probation can help you to access - We would see if Private renting is an option for you - We would see if a Training Flat is available - If you are on the SCQ we would see if your application can be prioritised - We will see if there is a Housing Association property that we can offer you. - We may ask you if there are any friends or family that you can stay with while we sort out options	Your PA and Future House would support you to access the Homeless Persons Unit (HPU) in the area that you are living

IF I'M NOT HAPPY, HOW DO I COMPLAIN?

What am I unhappy about	Who do I speak to first	Who do I speak to if it's not sorted
I'm in Supported Accommodation and I am unhappy with something to do with that accommodation	- The keyworkers and managers within that Accommodation (e.g Centrepoint staff, Future First Housing Manager, Ekaya Staff, Nacro staff depending on which organisation runs my accommodation) - My PA or their manager if they are not around	Make a complaint to the Supported Accommodation provider (Nacro, Centepoint, Ekaya etc) via their complaints team. Every project should have a Complaints process clearly available to residents. Complain to Wandsworth Council
I'm not happy with the way that my Pathway Plan is progressing my Housing Plans	- If I'm under 18, it'll be my Social Worker and my IRO or my Advocate - If I'm over 18, it's my PA or My Advocate if I have one (If I haven't got one and I want one when I'm over or under 18, I can contact them on **www.theadvocacypeople.org.uk** or by calling the main hub number 0330 440 9000.	My PAs Manager If I don't get the response I want, I can Complain to Wandsworth Council

I am not happy with the Settled Accommodation that the council has offered me	You should be given 48 Hours to consider an offer of Settled Accommodation. Your PA and Future House will support you to contact the Housing Department within 21 days of the offer if you have evidence that the Accommodation is unsuitable by emailing **allocationteam@ wandsworth.gov.uk**	If I don't get the response I want, I can Complain to Wandsworth Council
I have a repair or a problem with my Settled Accommodation	- This will always need to go to your landlord. You need to make sure that you know how to report a problem or repair and your PA can help you to do this	Every Council and Housing association has a complaints department- you should report a complaint to them if you do not get the response you need. You can also get advice and support from Shelter

SOME EXAMPLES OF PEOPLE'S ACCOMMODATION JOURNEYS

Akim, 20

Akim was in a residential children's home in Essex from just after his 16th Birthday to when he turned 18 but Akim asked to come back to Wandsworth when he turned 18.

At 17.5, his Social Worker referred him to a High Support room in the Supported Accommodation provided by Centrepoint and he moved in just after his 18th Birthday.

Akim stayed there for a year and he was doing well enough to get his name on the SCQ but things with one of the other tenants got a bit tense.

To avoid getting evicted, Akim moved to another Supported Accommodation option (a flatshare) where he stayed for 8 months. In that time, he got offered his Settled flat by the Council. He had been on the Social Care Queue for a year before he got offered his settled accommodation.

Naomi 18 and Blu-Rain, 14 months

Naomi was 17 and in a foster placement when she had Blu-Rain. She stayed with her foster carers for 5 months after the Blu was born but as she approached 18, she asked to move into her own accommodation. Naomi was offered a space in Supported Mother and Baby Accommodation in Wandsworth and she has been there for 9 months.

Naomi has been on the SCQ for 9 months but there is a long wait for 2 bedroom properties. Naomi works and has decided that she wants to privately rent a home for her and Blu out in Surrey, where she has some friends. She has managed to save up £1000 to pay a Guarantor Company and the Housing Department have offered to pay her Deposit and Rent in advance.

She has spent 3 months trying to find a property that she can afford but this week, she thinks she has found one. If it all goes to plan, she wants to move into her Privately Rented Settled Accommodation next month.

Ajax, 20

Ajax's Foster Carers did not feel able to do Staying Put and so Ajax moved into Supported Accommodation just after he turned 18.

Unfortunately, Ajax found it really hard to stick to the rules of his tenancy and he kept letting large groups of friends into his room. He refused to meet with his Supported Accommodation keyworker or his PA and he got more and more into debt because he was not paying his rent. Ajax was evicted.

His PA referred him to another Supported Accommodation option but Ajax was rude at the interview and he was not offered a place there. With no other options, Ajax was referred to the Homeless Persons Unit and he was given a studio flat in Hounslow as his only option for temporary accommodation.

Ajax was not happy being further away from Wandsworth but he has got himself a job in Hounslow and things are looking much better. Ajax has been there for nearly two years and we hope that the Council will offer him Settled Accommodation soon.

Mariam, 19

Mariam was in Staying Put for about 9 months before she asked to move out. Her name had only been on the SCQ for a month so when she left her Staying Put arrangement, she moved into one of the low support Supported Accommodation spaces and she stayed there for another 9 months before she was offered her Settled Accommodation in a Housing Association property that Future First were able to offer her.

Mya, 19

Mya had lived in her Children's Home for 3 years and was due to start Uni 5 months after she turned 18.

When she turned 18 she was still studying so her Social Worker and her Placement organised for her to move into a Semi-Independent flat just down the road from her Children's Home, with the staff popping in to check on her every day. Mya's University offered her a 50% discount on her Halls of Residence accommodation while she studied. She started Uni last year and Future First pay for her to rent an Air B'n'B flat near her old Children's Home at Christmas so that she can see friends and her old staff members.

She lives in at her Uni accommodation the whole of the year and she will do this for the rest of her degree.

Desiree, 19

Desiree moved into Supported Accommodation when she was 17.5 because her foster placement broke down. She started off in the High Support accommodation project but was doing well and moved into a lower support option. However, Desiree then stopped paying her rent and started breaking the rules of her tenancy by smoking cannabis in her room. She did not take any steps to put it right and was evicted. She was referred to a different Supported Accommodation project and is now paying her rent and things are better. Her PA has just helped her complete her SCQ forms and while she is waiting for her Settled Accommodation, she will stay where she is.

USEFUL WEBSITES

Find out more about support for Care Experienced Young People with Housing and Accommodation:

VISIT

Help and housing for care leavers

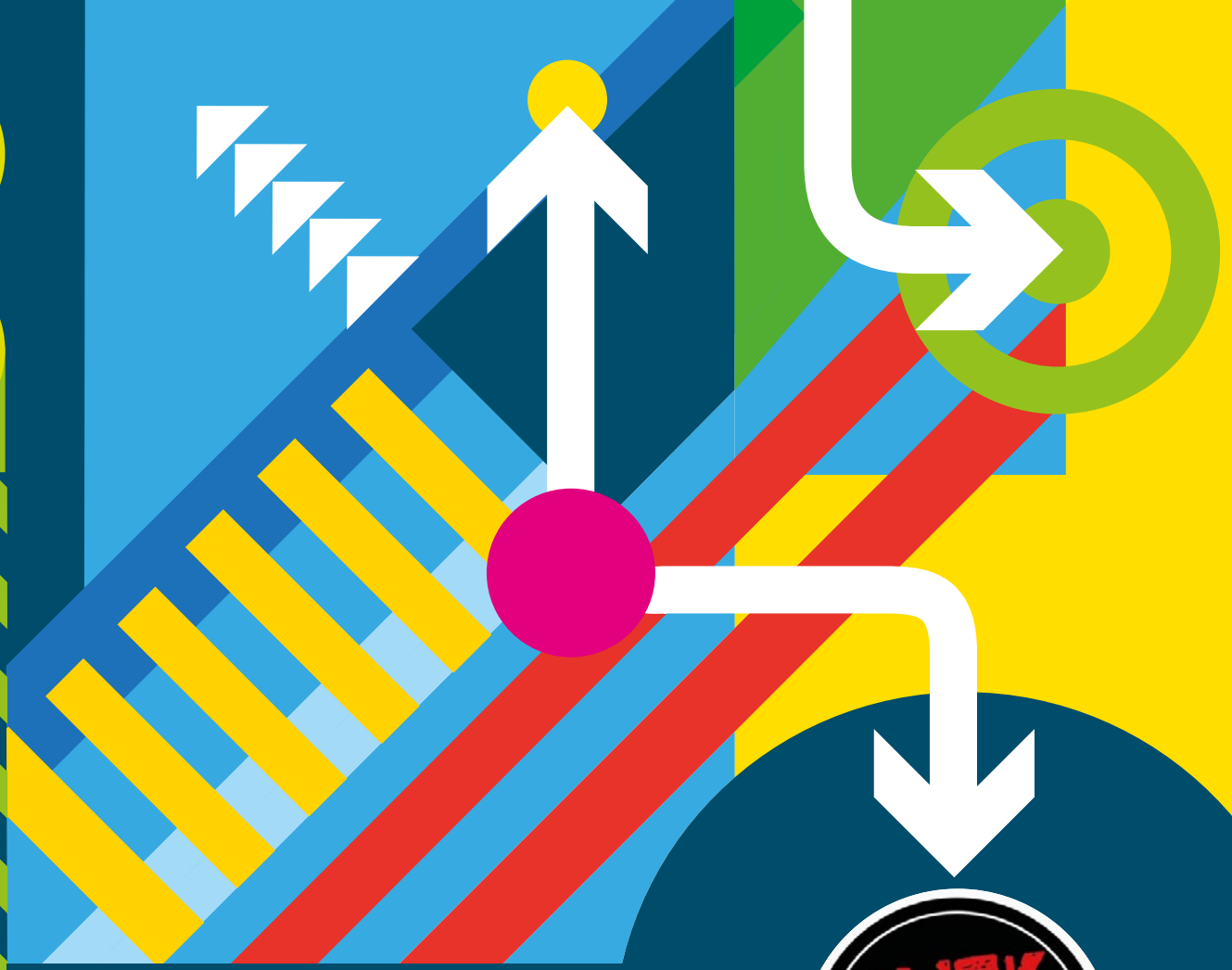
Being A Care Leaver -

Wandsworth council Housing Waiting lists

Housing Allocation Scheme

The Advocacy People
or you can call the main hub
0330 440 9000.

What if I'm in my Settled Accommodation and I decide I want to move in the future?



CLICK PLUS APPROVED

SO... WHAT ABOUT Accommodation?

A guide for Wandsworth care leavers

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