

17.5 Family Placement Team

Eligibility Criteria for The Provision of Any Residential Or Fostering Resource

Purpose

To ensure fair access to the resources for looked after children.

To ensure consistent thresholds are applied when managers are deciding to accommodate.

Criteria (1-5 Inclusive, or 6, Before Accommodation)

1. A chronology and core assessment will have been completed, with a clear action plan. Priority will be given to those children and young people in greatest need. Where a child is accommodated short term the plan must involve work with the family to avoid future accommodation.
2. The Social Worker must demonstrate a referral to a family support service (e.g. CAHMS, Family Center, Family Resource Team) has been made and why this work failed or demonstrate an alternative comprehensive package of preventative work (under CP procedures), which also failed.
3. Evidence that appropriate relatives, family and friends from both sides of the birth family have been approached to offer accommodation and been ruled out. See legal framework for accommodation) where this involves overriding the main carers' wishes not to use relatives.
4. It should be demonstrated that the provision of accommodation should significantly enhance the quality of life experienced by the child or young person.
5. The Team Manager has sanctioned accommodation on the basis of the above criteria.
6. CP procedures and care proceedings have been / are being initiated and the plan requires accommodation.

NB At point of accommodation all teenage placements will be offered on a temporary basis (except where subject of Care Order)

Emergency Placements

1. The only circumstances in which an individual may enter either residential or a family placement without an assessment will be emergency situations in which the individual:
 - a) has experienced significant harm
 - or

- b) is at imminent risk of experiencing such harm
or
- c) represents a similar level of risk to others

And where residential or foster carer placement is the only option immediately available to protect the individual, e.g. there are no suitable family or friends.

Where emergency accommodation is provided, a planning meeting will be held within three working days.

Legal Framework For Accommodation

Section 20, Children Act 1989 sets out the circumstances in which the local authority has a duty to accommodate children. These are as follows:

1. Local authorities must provide accommodation for a child in need who requires accommodation as a result of:
 - a) there is no person with parental responsibility for the child;
 - b) the child is lost or has been abandoned;
 - c) the person who has been caring for the children is prevented - either temporarily or permanently - from providing the child with suitable accommodation or care.

The majority of children are accommodated under S20 (1)c - social workers will need to assess whether or not a person is being prevented from providing a child with care.

2. The local authority cannot accommodate a child if a person with parental responsibility for the child who is willing and able to provide or to arrange accommodation for the child objects to local authority accommodation. A person with parental responsibility for the child may at any time remove the child from local authority accommodation.

The exception to the above is if the person requesting accommodation has a residence order in their favor or this places them in a stronger position than other people with parental responsibility, or if the child is aged 16 or over and agrees to the provision or accommodation.

3. Local authorities also have a duty to provide accommodation for any child in need who is aged 16 or over and whose welfare the authority consider is likely to be seriously prejudiced if the child is not provided with accommodation.
4. The wishes and feelings of children need to be taken into account regarding the provision of accommodation (as far as is reasonably practical).

5. The wishes and feelings of parents, those with parental responsibility and any other relevant person (in the local authority's view) to be obtained and taken into account regarding the provision of accommodation.
6. As a matter of good practice, all people with parental responsibility should be informed of a child's accommodation, particularly if they have the power to remove the child from accommodation.
7. As a matter of good practice, parents without parental responsibility should also be informed of the child's accommodation although this should be discussed first with the parent requesting accommodation.
8. If the parent requesting accommodation is opposed to a parent without parental responsibility or a member of the extended family being informed of the child's accommodation this opposition should not normally be overruled.
 - a) Legal advice should be sought if it is considered that a child should be placed with a parent without parental responsibility or member of the extended family in opposition to the wishes and feelings of the parent requesting accommodation.