

What is best for me?

Youth homelessness advice for 16 and 17-year-olds

This leaflet provides you with information on how Children's Services
and Housing will work together to support you.



SURREY

You have told us you are homeless; at risk of homelessness; or your housing is lacking safety or security.

If you have nowhere to stay, we can help you resolve issues at home. If you are unable to return to your last address or it is not safe, Children's Services and Housing will work with you to make sure you have a safe place to stay.

What is homelessness?

Being homeless means not having a safe place to call home. There are many things that can lead to a person becoming homeless. These may include family relationship breakdown, problems with mental health, abuse, or risk of violence.

What happens next?

There are certain processes that we need to follow to make sure you are getting the support that is right for you. You may need accommodation during this time.

If you have contacted Children's Services first, your allocated worker will carry out a complete assessment of your needs. This will happen within 10 working days. As part of this process, the worker will talk to you and your family/those who have been caring for you.

Your allocated worker will also ask your permission to make a statutory (legal) referral to your local housing department and a referral to an independent advocacy service.

Advocacy means getting support from another person, to help you express your views, wishes and feelings, and to help you stand up for your rights.

If you have contacted a Housing department first, then the housing officer will contact Children's Services. Housing will carry out an assessment of your housing situation.

Possible outcomes for the assessment

- It may be decided that you can remain or return home to your family. As part of this process, your worker may actively arrange mediation work. Mediation supports positive communication and can help to work through disagreements. It can support and improve relationships between you and family members.
- It may be agreed that you can stay with relatives or other trusted adults in your life.
- It may be decided that you need to be provided with accommodation by Children's Services. This could be as a 'looked after' young person (under section 20 of the 1989 Children's Act). You will have an allocated Social Worker, see below.
- If you don't think you need to be 'looked after' you will still have a plan of support as a 'Child in Need' (section 17 of the 1989 Children's Act). In rare circumstances you may be offered accommodation as a Child in Need, or your support may include housing services under Part 7 of the 1996 Housing Act. You will have an allocated Social Worker, see below.

Your wishes and feelings

Before making any decisions, please make sure you talk through the options with your allocated worker, trusted adult, or an independent advocate. You will have the opportunity to tell us what you think is best for you.

What does S20 and S17 mean?

S20 Local authority care under the Children's Act 1989

Children's Services are responsible for housing young people aged 16 and 17 who are homeless. If you are assessed as needing accommodation, you will be given the option to come into care, this is also called being 'looked after'. You will have an allocated Social Worker.

- If you are looked after, Children's Services will continue working with you and your family/friend network to support a return home, where it is safe to do so.
- You will be provided with accommodation and support. The type of accommodation and support offered will depend on your needs. Your wishes and feelings will be considered in deciding the type of accommodation that is best for you. For example, this could be with foster carers, in supported housing or supported lodgings with a host family. This accommodation will be funded up to your 18th birthday. You may be able to stay on past your 18th birthday, and you will be supported to move on to other accommodation when you are ready.
- If you stay in care, for a certain period of time (13 weeks), you will have a care and pathway plan. This plan can help you with:
 - housing issues and appointments
 - education, training, and employment
 - independent living skills
 - supporting relationships with family members
 - health and wellbeing, including health checks
 - any other advice and support
- You will also receive financial support. Your rent will be paid, and you will get a weekly allowance.
- You may be able to get help with further education, this could include support with somewhere to live, in the holidays, if you decide to go to University.
- You will have regular visits from your social worker.
- There will be regular meetings for you to attend, with those who are supporting you, to make sure you are getting all the help you need. These are organised by an Independent Reviewing Officer.

- The Independent Reviewing Officer makes sure that the council is doing all the right things for you, and that they are listening to your views, wishes and feelings.
- If you have agreed to be referred to an advocate, the advocate can help you have your say and may represent your views, wishes and feelings, at any of the meetings, if you so wish.
- Once you have been in care for 13 weeks or more, you will be entitled to leaving care services. For more information see our [Local Offer for Care Leavers](#).
- If you have not been in care for 13 weeks, before you turn 18, you can still receive support and guidance as a 'Qualifying Care Leaver' after you turn 18.
- If you have been accommodated under S20, this can help with future housing options. For example, you may get extra priority on a Council housing register.

S17 Supported as a child in need

If you are unable to return home and do not wish to be accommodated under S20, your allocated worker will discuss your options for supported accommodation with you. You may still have a plan of support as a 'Child in Need', and an allocated Social Worker.

- You are not legally able to hold a tenancy in your own right until you are over 18 years of age.
- If you do not wish to accept S20 you may get support as a young person in need.
- A social worker will work with you and your housing worker to create a plan based on what you need, which will describe who will be able to support you and how.
- There will be regular meetings and reviews for you to attend. Those are with the workers who are supporting you, to check you are getting all the help you need.
- If you have agreed to be referred to an advocate, the advocate can help you have your say and may represent your views, wishes and feelings, at any of the meetings, if you so wish.
- You may get support with:
 - housing issues and appointments
 - education, employment, and training
 - relationships with family members

- health and wellbeing
- other advice and support as needed
- you may also get some financial support, from Children's Services, until you receive your own benefits.
- You will be responsible for paying your own rent and living costs. If you don't have much money, you will probably need to claim some financial support or 'benefits' to help you. These usually cover the rent, but you will have to pay the weekly service charge out of your income or other benefits. The weekly service charge rate varies and is around £12 on average, depending on the provider of the accommodation.
- You will be allocated a Key Worker who may also support you in:
 - your claims for benefits
 - helping you settle into your accommodation
 - managing your budget and paying your services charges
 - accessing education/training/apprenticeship/employment opportunities
 - accessing other services e.g., re-registering with a GP, youth services, counselling
 - moving on to more independent accommodation
- You may be able to live in the supported accommodation beyond 18 years of age.

Note: You could be evicted from your accommodation because of something you have done or failed to do. This could include not paying the rent or service charge, or breaking the rules set by the accommodation provider. If you are evicted, the council may not have a duty to provide you with any other accommodation. This may also affect any future housing support you may need.

Joint meeting: Children's Services and Housing

Whether you choose S20 or not, it is important that you understand what your housing options look like both now and in the future.

These options could include:

- moving into some housing that offers you support e.g. foster placement, supported lodgings or semi-independent placement
- renting a room in a shared house with other young people
- tied accommodation, this is housing which is linked to a job
- applying to the housing register for your own council or housing association property in the future

These options will be discussed with you at the joint meeting. This is your opportunity to hear what the options are and start to consider what a plan for the future may look like for you.

Your Social Worker will arrange this joint meeting, and an advocate can support you if you wish.

You can change your mind!

If you tell us that you do not want to be accommodated under S20, and are instead supported under S17, you can ask for this to be changed in the future.

Questions and complaints

If you have any questions or need any further information about your options, please ask the worker carrying out your assessment.

Important: If you turn down any offers of suitable accommodation, your allocated worker will talk to you about the risks of this. Please also talk to an independent advocate before you refuse any offer.

If, at any point, you would like to submit a complaint, please contact the Children's Customer Relations Team:

- Email: be.heard@surreycc.gov.uk
- Phone: 01483 519095

The Be Heard team are impartial and are separate from the Social Work and Housing teams. Their job is to make sure your voice is heard and that this comes through when your complaint is being dealt with.

Please sign below to confirm that you fully understand the information provided:

I now understand my housing and support options, and I have discussed this with my allocated worker.

I have been offered an independent advocate.

Name:

Signed:Date.....

Useful information and contacts details:

Surrey Children's Services

C-SPA, Children's Services Single Point of Access:

- Request for Support Team (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)
- Phone: 0300 470 9100
- Email: cspa@surreycc.gov.uk emails are dealt with during normal office hours
- Out of Hours phone: 01483 517898 to speak to the Emergency Duty Team.

Borough/District Council contacts:

North West

Runnymede: 01932 838383

Surrey Heath: 01276 707100

Woking: 01483 743 834

North East

Spelthorne: 01784 446383

Elmbridge: 01372 474590

Epsom and Ewell: 01372 732000

South West

Guildford: 01483 444244

Waverley: 01483 523188

South East

Mole Valley: 01306 885001

Reigate and Banstead:
01737 276790

Tandridge: 01883 722000

Other organisations that give housing advice and support:

Shelter

Homelessness charity which offers a free 24 hour helpline giving information on housing.

- Freephone number: 0808 800 4444.
- [Homeless help if you're 16 or 17 Shelter England](#)
- [Shelter website](#)

Centrepont:

Homelessness charity offering advice to anyone in England aged 16 to 25

- Freephone number: 0808 800 0661 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)
- [I'm under 18 | Centrepont](#)
- [Centrepont website](#)

Advocacy

Reconstruct Advocacy

“Empowering children and young people to make sure that their rights are respected and ensure their views, wishes and feelings are heard.”

- Freephone: 0800 3891 571 between 9am until 5 pm.
- Out of these hours call: 07857 618 559

Barnardo's

Visit the [Barnardo's website](#) to find a local advocacy service.

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Simple flow chart to show process:

