

Sunderland City Council

NEXT STEPS

SUITABLE ACCOMODATION

Children's Services



SUNDERLAND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

'Suitable Accommodation'

Suitable Accommodation

Regulation 28 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations and Guidance 2015 and Section 23B of the Children Act 1989 requires that the local authority provides a placement in 'Other Arrangements' for 16 & 17 year old children looked after (if assessed to need a semi-independent setting) or 'Suitable Accommodation' for 16 & 17 year old care leavers who are making the transition to independent living.

The 'Other Arrangements' section of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations and Guidance 2015 and regulation 9(2) of the Care Leavers Regulations defines what is meant by 'Other Arrangements' and 'Suitable Accommodation', the two definitions having a high degree of concurrence.

It is accommodation:

- Which, so far as reasonably practicable, is suitable for the child in light of his needs, including his health needs;
- In respect of which the responsible authority has satisfied itself as to the character and suitability of the landlord or other provider;
- Complies with health and safety requirements related to rented accommodation; and
- In respect of which the responsible authority has, so far as reasonably practicable, taken into account the child's
 - wishes and feelings; and
 - education, training or employment needs.

In deciding whether accommodation is suitable, local authorities must have regard to the matters set out in Schedule 2 to the Care Leavers Regulations. This Schedule contains the same requirements as Schedule 6 in the Care Planning Regulations, so pages 74 - 80 of the related Volume 2 guidance which looks at the factors that must be considered in determining whether accommodation is suitable for individual care leavers, is also relevant.

This Schedule should not be read as a simple checklist. In evaluating the suitability of a specific property a local authority may not be able to satisfy itself that the accommodation is "suitable" on every factor. For example, a property may not be in an ideal location, whilst "affordability" will be influenced by the location and by changes in the young person's financial circumstances.

Leaving care services will need to put arrangements in place for checking suitability before a young person moves into a property. Services should establish good working relationships with local housing and environmental services so they can access advice and support with this task. In practice, the process should allow for decisions to be made at short notice, so that care leavers can obtain properties where, for example, there is competition for the accommodation.

Where checks of an accommodation's suitability identifies the need for improvements to bring the property up to a standard of suitability, then it may be necessary to arrange for these to be made after the property has been obtained for the young person. For example, the authority might assist the young person to decorate or provide funding to improve its security. Likewise young people must be given thorough information about how they can get help if problems occur with their accommodation.

Local authorities should ensure that when placing young people in such placements they receive appropriate supervision and contact from the authority.

Suitable Accommodation - Explanation:

1. The accommodation is deemed safe and secure and the young person is not put at risk by other young person placed in the same accommodation (or their peers/associates);
2. The landlord, agency/provider and/or support staff are deemed of suitable character and do not pose a risk to the young person;
3. The accommodation is located within an area that does not increase the risk to the young person;
4. The accommodation is located within an area that enables the young person to access their family and friends and their education, training or employment activities and/or has suitable transport links;
5. The accommodation is affordable should the young person remain living there in their own right at the age 18. For example, the accommodation must be within the Local Housing Allowance rate for a property of that type within the given area;
6. The accommodation complies with all health and safety legislation and standards that apply to the type of property, i.e. private rented, registered landlord accommodation, or a house in multiple occupations.

This document should be read in conjunction with Sunderland Children's Services - 'Other Arrangements' and 'Suitable Accommodation' framework which sets out the full list of requirements.