

**Placements Commissioning Team**

**Practice Guidance –** **Placements for Young People who are 16/17**

**Introduction**

The placement of children who are 16/17 is different to under 16’s and Social Workers need to understand what is required when requesting a placement for every looked after child who is 16/17.

This Guidance is intended to provide a quick summary and should be read alongside the more detailed [‘**What You need to Know Social Workers Guide – Supported Accommodation Framework 2022 – 2026’**](https://proceduresonline.com/trixcms2/media/15776/supported-accommodation-guidance-for-social-workers-july-2022-v2.docx)

**Legal Framework**

The legal framework for the placement of children who are 16/17 requires an assessment of the young person’s needs and the **type of placement** required. Essentially much of this is covered within the Pathway Plan which will determine the young person’s needs and the ‘type’ of placement required.

Many young people see reaching ‘16’ as a milestone and despite best efforts will only consider semi-independent’ living and will not engage with a traditional children’s home environment. The needs and wishes of the young person must be considered in the assessment and will influence the type of placement requested.

The legal framework for 16/17 young people who are homeless is slightly different and reference should be made to the relevant guidance in Tri-x.

**What Accommodation is Available?**

The ‘assessment’ will conclude that the following ‘type’ of placement is required:

* **Foster Care** – where the young person wishes to live in a family and their needs can be supported in this environment.
* **Residential Care (Children’s Homes)** - where a family environment is unsuitable and the young person requires a significant level of care
* **Supported Accommodation** – where the young person needs a lower level of support that is ‘semi-independent’.
* **Specialist** – e.g ‘Secure Accommodation’

Most placements will be straightforward and where young people require a foster placement, supported accommodation or a Children’s Home placement, their needs are clear and a placement can be identified – this will not be problematic.

However, for some young people who require a placement in a Children’s Home as they require ‘care’ - this poses a problem with the regulatory position if a placement cannot be found.

**Understanding Supported Accommodation or Residential Care?**

There are broadly two types of ‘residential’ placement:

**Residential Care** is a Children’s Home registered with Ofsted. For some young people who are looked after, this will be the only option to keep them safe however, for some, being in a Children’s Home may increase risk and therefore may not always be suitable for a young person who is high risk.

**Supported Accommodation** is a semi-independent living and outreach service for 16-21 year olds, and suitable for those young people who can live in accommodation with minimum levels of supervision. Supported Accommodation Providers are not expected to provide direct care or interventions however, there will be different ‘levels of support’ (see below).

The decision regarding the appropriate ‘type’ of accommodation will therefore involve an element of judgement as part of the assessment.

In essence, the placement request must be accurate and reflect the right placement that not only will meet the young person’s ‘needs’ but they will engage and commit to.

The Statutory Review process will endorse this plan and should be considered in advance of the young person reaching 16 initially, and at subsequent Statutory Reviews.

(The differences between ‘supported accommodation’ and ‘residential care’ are explained in more detail in **Appendix 1.)**

**What next?**

Having undertaken the assessment and determined the needs of the young person, the ‘Placement Request Form should be completed, with significant detail in the 16/17 section. This will provide the evidence to support the placement ‘type’ requested.

It may not always be possible to provide the choice of placement requested and where there is a variation – this will be recorded and tracked in order to evidence sufficiency and influence future commissioning.

**In addition, where the placement request is for ‘residential care’ or ‘foster care’ and the only offer is ‘supported accommodation’ this will be considered as an ‘unregulated placement’ and the relevant Guidance must be followed.**

**UASC**

For the majority of young people, supported accommodation will be assessed as suitable accommodation to meet their needs. There are two categories specifically for unaccompanied children. However, there may be occasions when a young person is assessed as being under 16 or based on the assessment they need ‘care’ and they are placed in ‘supported accommodation’ when they should be in registered accommodation. This would then be an ‘unregulated placement’ and the flowchart must be followed.

**Over 16/17 Young People still in Statutory Education**

The Trust’s position requires that all children who are still in school must be placed in ‘regulated provision’. Where, for whatever reason they are placed in ‘supported accommodation’ this is an unregulated placement and the flowchart must be followed.

**Unregulated Placements (New Placements)**

For young people who are 16/17 in unregulated placements a greater level of scrutiny is required. For many they will already be subject to increased visiting and management oversight due to their high profile and complexity of needs.

The following is a ‘guide’ to the minimum expectations when young people are ‘placed’ in an unregulated setting and these will vary according to the particular young person.

**Minimum Requirements**

* The HofS/AD is informed prior to the placement and agrees – Decision entered on the child’s record by the TM/S/W.
* HofS/AD requests approval from the Director of Practice – Decision entered on the child’s record
* Visiting frequency is agreed at the same time.
* IRO is informed and considers whether a Review is required to endorse a change of Care Plan
* Risk Assessment/Safety Plan is agreed by the HofS within 24 hours.
* Social Worker accompanies young person to the placement.
* Social Worker to visit and complete Placement Planning meeting within 72 hours – Chaired by the TM and considers the Risk Assessment/Safety Plan, which includes frequency of visiting
* Commissioning confirms all due diligence checks are completed and undertakes a QA visit within 7 days.
* H of S maintains regular oversight and reviews the case, at least monthly.
* If there are any significant changes a care planning meeting will be arranged at the earliest opportunity.

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**Unregulated Placements (Existing Placements & Review of Placements)**

For new placements the process is clear as outlined above however, there will be existing unregulated arrangements that have been in place historically.

It is essential that all placements are reviewed regularly as the circumstances of the young person may change and whilst they may have required a Children’s Home (Care) placement initially, as time moves on their needs may be met within a ‘Supported Accommodation’ placement.

Where this occurs naturally, this should be agreed with the HofS/AD and they can be ‘stepped down’.

For all 16/17 young people, the ‘Pathway Plan’ should be updated by the Social Worker to reflect any changes and reviewed by the IRO routinely as part of the Statutory Review process.

The ‘status of the placement’ for every young person will therefore be formally reviewed at least every six months, as a minimum.

**Tracking/Reporting**

Placements/Commissioning will track all 16/17 unregulated placements and routinely provide updated reports to AD’s & Heads of Service on the basis of the current package of care provided. This will enable more effective management oversight of this cohort of children. Some young people will also be the subject of scrutiny at Panels.

Every Social Worker should ensure that for every 16/17 year old on their caseload, there is clarity on the ‘status of the placement’ and every ‘unregulated placement’ is identified and discussed within supervision.

The Head of Service will maintain oversight of all the 16/17 unregulated cohort in their Area and ensure there is regular review, both formally through the Statutory Review process and informally, through discussion.

All key decisions, eg. ‘step down’ must be clearly recorded on the young person’s case record

**What type of supported accommodation is available?**

The Trust has been using the West Midlands Supported Accommodation Framework Agreement since 2017 for 16-17-year olds who require semi-independent living. A new Framework has been recently commissioned and this contract went live on 1st February 2022. in some cases, a placement may be extended beyond 18 and must be authorised and funding agreed before the young person reaches 18.

The new framework has been extended to 7 categories from 5, this now includes specific categories of support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers. The categories are dependent on the type of accommodation and support required for each young person.

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| **Category** | | **Categories of Service – Accommodation Types** |
| **1** | Single Accommodation + face to face support hours as agreed in writing by Council | Accommodation in this Category is for sole occupancy and may be a studio flat, 1/2 bedroom flat, or a 1/2/3-bedroom house. |
| **2** | Shared 2-4 Accommodation + face to face support hours as agreed in writing by Council | Accommodation in this category needs to be sufficient for the number of occupants and may be   * 2+ bedroom flat or house with either shared bathroom and toilet facilities or en-suite rooms with shared kitchen/living/meeting/laundry room/s. * Partially self-contained Studio rooms with small kitchenette, en-suite with access to larger main kitchen/living/meeting area |
| **3** | Outreach Support not linked to specific Accommodation | Service not linked to specific accommodation |
| **4** | Shared 2+ with sleep-in staff on site from 10.00pm to 7.00am each night, individual support hours to meet the individual Young Person’s needs, Staff to be on call 24 hours to provide support if necessary. Unlimited hours of support where required. To provide support during the day as required without additional costs. | Accommodation in this Category should provide a Young Person with as a minimum own room with shared facilities for example bathroom, toilet, kitchen/living/meeting room and laundry facilities.  Can also include:   * En-suite room with shared kitchen/living/meeting and laundry room/s * Studio flat with small kitchenette, en-suite access to shared kitchen/meeting/living and laundry room/s * 1 Bedroom self-contained accommodation within a cluster on one site |
| **5** | Shared 2+ with staff on site 24/7 with individual support hours to meet the individual Young Person’s needs, unlimited hours of support where required. Additional staff available to support individual Young People within the community. Waking night support.  To provide support as required without additional costs. | Accommodation in this Category should provide a Young Person with as a minimum own room with shared facilities for example bathroom, toilet, kitchen/living/meeting room and laundry facilities. Can also include:   * En-suite room with shared kitchen/living/meeting and laundry room/s * Studio flat with small kitchenette, en-suite access to shared kitchen/meeting/living and laundry room/s * 1 Bedroom self-contained accommodation within a cluster on one site |
| **6** | UASCs - Single Accommodation + face to face support hours as required in writing by Council. | UASC’s  Accommodation in this Category is for sole occupancy and may be a studio flat, 1/2 bedroom flat, or a 1/2/3-bedroom house. |
| **7** | UASCs - Shared 2-4 Accommodation + face to face support hours as required in writing by Council. | UASC’s  Accommodation in this category needs to be sufficient for the number of occupants and may be   * 2+ bedroom flat or house with either shared bathroom and toilet facilities or en-suite rooms with shared kitchen/living/meeting/laundry room/s.   Partially self-contained Studio rooms with small kitchenette, en-suite with access to larger main kitchen/living/meeting area |

**Payments/Allowances**

For Supported Accommodation placements, all utilities, heating, lighting, water and sewerage charges are included in the standard placement cost. The cost of a TV licence and internet is also included in the weekly fee. Young people will be expected to contribute to the cost of these items. The provider shall be responsible for the collection of a contribution in the amount of £15 per week from each young person. Some providers don’t charge this, some charge less, but £15 per week is the maximum they can charge for a contribution to utilities.

If the young person is already in receipt of personal allowance the preference is that it is paid directly into their bank account. If the young person does not have an account, you can request that placements service agrees, at point of placement, with the provider that the £59.20 per week personal allowance is paid for a 4-week period and the Provider will invoice the Trust accordingly.

For young people who are placed in ‘unregulated arrangements’ where an enhanced fee is being paid, i.e. equivalent to a Children’s Home fee – this is an ‘all inclusive fee’ and the Provider will be expected to provide the same support to a young person as in a Children’s Home/Regulated arrangement, e.g food, pocket money, clothing allowance, activities etc.

**Placement Changes**

All changes must go through the placements team and not agreed directly with the Provider to ensure we are paying for the right level of support that is being delivered.

It is also imperative that young people are not moved without adhering to the placements process as there may be intelligence about a provision which may impact the decision to place with a particular Provider or specific address.

**Notice Periods**

Notified in writing to the Provider with a copy to the mailbox.

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| **Categories 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7** | 7 (seven) days if the Young Person has been in the Placement for 2 (two) weeks or less14 (fourteen) days if the Young Person has been in the Placement for more than 2 (two) weeks  **For categories 1, 2, 6 and 7, support hours cease immediately when the Placement ends but if there is a need for a reduction of support hours seven (7) days’ notice is required.** |
| **Category 3** | 7 (seven) days’ notice |

**APPENDIX 1**

**DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION & RESIDENTIAL CARE**

* Can young people go out of the establishment without staff permission?
  + Where young people remain in the care of staff, whether the young person are in or out of the establishment, and therefore are expected to ask permission to leave the establishment, that indicates care is provided
* Do young people have full control of their own finances?
  + Where staff have any control or responsibility for a young person’s finances, this is an indicator that care is provided, not support.
* Do young people have control over what they wear and of the resources to buy clothes?
  + Where staff have any control or responsibility to provide what children wear or to buy their clothes, this is an indicator that care is provided, not support.
* Are young people in charge of meeting all of their own health needs, including such things as arranging GP or specialist health care appointments? Do staff control any young person’s medication?
  + Young people may ask for advice and help about their health, but if decisions about health care rest with the young person, this may indicate that they are living independently rather than being cared for.    On the other hand, where staff are responsible for managing arrangements for meeting young people’s health needs, this is an indicator that care is provided. This includes control and administration of medication; providers can store it where there are identified risks but are not to administer it to young people.
* Do staff have access to medical records?
  + Where staff have access to young person’s medical records, this is an indicator that care is provided.
* Can young people choose to stay away overnight?
  + If young people are free to decide for themselves that they may stay overnight then this is an indication that they are functioning independently.  If staff are responsible for deciding whether it is appropriate for a young person to stay out overnight then this would be an indicator that care is being provided.    Being expected to tell someone if they are going to be away overnight does not indicate care, but needing to ask someone’s permission does.
* Is there a sanctions policy which goes beyond house rules and legal sanctions that would be imposed on any adult?
  + Where an establishment has and implements a formal or informal sanctions policy as described above, this is an indicator that care is provided.
* Are there regularly times when young people are on the premises with no direct staff supervision?
  + Where young people are expected to spend a significant amount of their time on their own, without staff supervision, then this would suggest that though perhaps they are being offered some support, they are largely operating independently and not being offered care.