

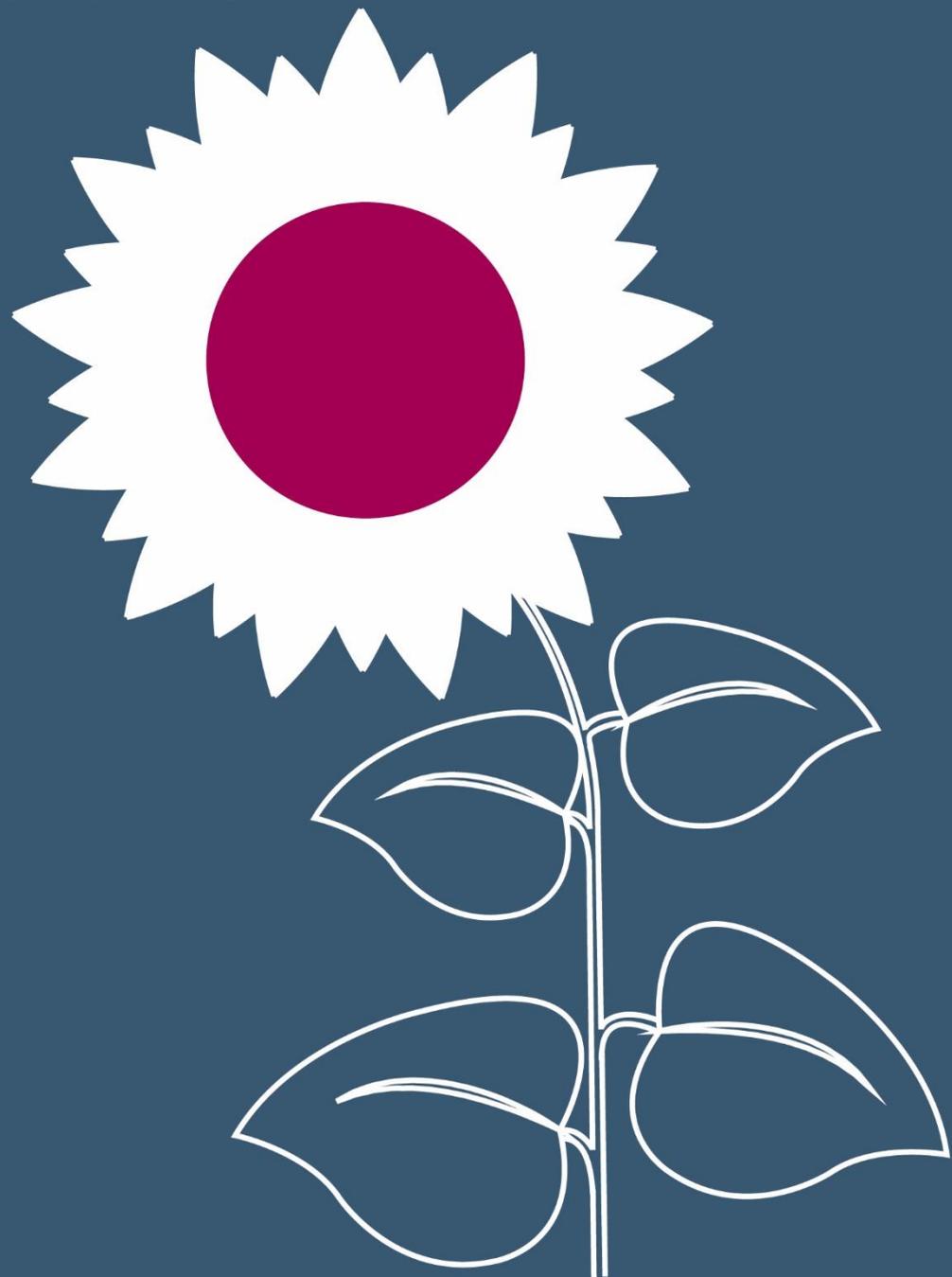


City of
Stoke-on-Trent

Admission to Care Accommodation Panel

Tri x 4_2_27 September 2021

Review September 2022



1. Purpose of the Admission to Care Accommodation Panel

- 1.1 The purpose of the (Admission to Care) Accommodation Panel is to provide an additional level of scrutiny and problem solving prior to a decision being made for a child/young person to become Looked After.
- 1.2 The Accommodation Panel will consider other alternative options for safeguarding and supporting young people and will offer a 'critical friend' review and exploration of all options and resources to ensure the best outcomes for the child/young person. (**See Appendix 1**) for the challenges panel will make. Service Managers should attend Panel prepared to respond to all of these questions.
- 1.3 A critical friend discussion should be requested by the Strategic Manager for CAST and will be provided by the Strategic Manager for Targeted Services where emergency admissions to care are requested and where a request has been made to book a child onto Accommodation Panel. The Strategic Manager for CAST should provide information sufficient to respond to all Critical Friend questions at **Appendix 1**. The critical friend discussion must be recorded and saved to Liquid Logic
- 1.4 The Accommodation Panel is a proactive forum. The flexibility around the cut-off for cases to be considered by the Panel (see Section 4.4) has been deliberately designed to ensure that, wherever possible, there is the opportunity for full discussion and detailed consideration before a decision is made to accommodate a child/young person.
- 1.5 It is acknowledged that there will always be occasions where a child/young person will need to be accommodated immediately, or as an emergency. However, the aim should always be to bring cases to the Panel prior to accommodating and, where it is feasible and safe to do so, agree an appropriate alternative course of action that does not require the child/young person to become Looked After.
- 1.6 Prior to a child's case being presented to Accommodation Panel, the child's social work assessment should be updated to clearly identify the child's needs, risks and why reception into care is assessed to be in their best interests. The assessment must clearly record direct work undertaken with the child to ascertain their wishes and feelings and the views/consent of parents and carers with parental responsibility must also be made clear. The Strategic Manager must review this assessment with the Service Manager and record a management decision on Liquid Logic that the child's case is appropriate to be presented to Accommodation Panel and all necessary work to avoid voluntary reception into care has been completed. They must specify the date they undertook the critical friend discussion.

2. Membership

2.1 The Accommodation Panel is made up of:

- Assistant Director – Early Help and Children’s Social Care (Chair)
- Strategic Manager – Targeted Services (Vice Chair)
- Service Managers presenting children’s cases to Panel
- The relevant Team Manager / Social Worker should be available by phone, if required
- Senior Broker
- Edge of Care Service Manager
- Family Group Conference Manager
- Small Group Homes Coordinator
- Virtual Head Teacher

2.2 Other managers and specialists may also be invited, as and when required.

2.3 The Accommodation Panel will be chaired by the Assistant Director, Early Help and Children’s Social Care. In their absence, responsibility for chairing will fall to the Strategic Manager, Targeted Services, or other by delegation.

3. Eligibility Criteria

3.1 The Accommodation Panel will consider all planned admissions to care in accordance with Section 20 (Children Act 1989).

3.2 All mother and baby placements will be considered by the Accommodation Panel as they should almost never be an emergency option. The pre-birth assessment must clearly analyse why a community-based parenting assessment cannot be achieved.

3.3 In exceptional circumstances, following a critical friend discussion, the Strategic Manager Targeted Services can give approval for a child/young person to be accommodated until the next Accommodation Panel, where the case will be presented and ratified. (**See Appendix 1** – Critical Friend crib-sheet).

3.4 A decision to provide accommodation to a 16 and 17-year old under s17 in an emergency must be subject to a critical friend discussion between the Strategic Manager requesting the accommodation and the Edge of Care Service Manager, or the Strategic Manager Targeted Services. All emergency accommodation provided under s17 will be subject to review and ratification by the Accommodation Panel. Critical Friend discussions are required and must be recorded on Liquid Logic by the Strategic manager for CAST.

- 3.5 Young people who have been provided with accommodation under s17 should have a Child in Need review six months prior to their 18th birthday to ensure timely transition planning. The case should be presented at Accommodation Panel *five months* before their 18th birthday.
- 3.6 All **immediate** or **emergency** admissions to care will be retrospectively considered by the Accommodation Panel and should be booked onto the Panel by the responsible Service Manager, at the point the placement is made. If required, the child's case will be reviewed again with the completion of the Child Social Work Assessment (CSWA) in four weeks.
- 3.7 Admissions to care, via a formal court route, will have been considered by the 'Legal Gateway' meeting (LGM) and will **not** be considered by the Accommodation Panel.
- 3.8 In respect to Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC), where appropriate, an assessment, including an Age Assessment, will have confirmed that they are children requiring accommodation. There is no need to present the case to the Accommodation Panel.

4 Structure of Meetings and Applications

- 4.1 The Accommodation Panel will convene weekly.
- 4.2 Appointments will be allocated in advance, by the Strategic Manager for Targeted Services who will collate cases for discussion at the stage when Strategic Managers engage in 'critical-friend' discussions about the proposal to accommodate.
- 4.3 Following each critical friend discussion, the content and outcome of the discussion must be recorded on the relevant Management Decision form by the Strategic Manager who is seeking the accommodation. This should then be sent to the placements@stoke.gov.uk to provide notice of a potential placement requirement.
- 4.4 Strategic Managers should aim to ensure that all cases are received by the Panel Administrator **2 working days prior to Panel**. kate.ackley@stoke.gov.uk However, if a case arises in the days immediately prior to Panel which requires consideration, this can still be submitted and accepted onto the agenda at the discretion of the Chair/Vice Chair.
- 4.5 **Strategic managers** should contact the Strategic Manager Targeted Services for a child's case to be allocated to a forthcoming Panel Agenda, or in their absence, to the Panel Administrator.

5. Panel Agenda/Documentation

- 5.1 An agenda of children's cases will be distributed prior to the Panel meeting. Panel papers will consist of: -
- The Chronology
 - The Child and Family Social Work Assessment, that has been completed/ updated, to include:
 - Analysis of the reason for accommodation
 - Risks
 - Protective Factors
 - Families and young person's views on how the Local Authority can support them
 - Risks and losses associated with care
 - Potential for placement with family or friends
 - Consent
 - Whether there has been a Family Group Conference (FGC)
 - Placement consideration.
 - Any prior involvement and outcomes from intervention with the FAST Team.
 - Views of permanent including exit from care strategies.
 - Child's current educational needs and placement and how these would be met if the child is admitted to care.
 - Views of other professionals working with the child and family.
 - Type of placement requested and how this will meet the child's identified needs.
 - The Management Decision sheet, which clearly outlines the context and analysis behind the decision/reason to accommodate the child/young person (from the Strategic Manager approving the child's case to come to Panel). This should include the 'critical friend' discussion summary.
 - For Regulation 24 cases, the Viability Assessment (Part 1) and approval from the Strategic Manager, Corporate Parenting.
- 5.2 The Service Manager presenting the case will be responsible for collating the relevant papers (see above) for the child's case, working in conjunction with the case holding social worker and team manager to aid effective preparation. Papers must be collated no later than **2 working days prior to Panel**.
- Cases not received within this timeframe will **not** be accepted by the Panel Administrator to send to Panel.
- 5.3 The agenda will be collated by the **Panel Administrator**, as instructed by the Strategic Manager, Targeted Services.
- 5.4 All Panel papers (listed in 5.1) will be uploaded to the Admission to Care folder on the p-drive.

6. Management Information

- 6.1 A spreadsheet of all children's cases considered will be kept by the Panel Administrator showing the number of cases considered, the outcome of each case and the number of cases that the Panel were able to divert from the looked after system.
- 6.2 The spreadsheet will also track cases and ensure that cases are returned to the Panel, where this was the decision.
- 6.3 Where it is agreed that a child/young person can be accommodated for a specific timeframe e.g. 4 weeks, the case will automatically be scheduled by the Panel Administrator to return to the Panel for review at the appropriate time.
- 6.4 Service Managers, presenting returning cases will be expected to give a detailed account of activity that has taken place in the interim to support the child/young person to return home. Where this has not been possible, the reasons for this **must** be clearly explained. The Panel will then discuss the options available and agree a suitable course of action that is focused on delivering the best possible outcome for the child/young person. Where a child's case is returning to Panel for Review and a statutory looked after child review has taken place, the view of the IRO should be shared with Panel.
- 6.5 Where it is agreed that a referral to the FAST Team will be made, the referral must be received by the FAST Team **within 24 hours** and a joint visit carried out by the case holding social worker and FAST worker **within 48 hours**.
- 6.6 Brief minutes will be taken by the Panel Administrator and recorded on an Entry to Care Minutes template on Liquid Logic.
- 6.7 Immediately after the Panel meeting, the Panel Administrator will produce a summary of the decisions made and send to the Strategic Manager, Targeted Services to be checked for accuracy. The Strategic Manager will approve the content and/or make changes as required and send to the Chair for formal sign-off.
- 6.8 Where the Chair is not able to respond immediately, the summary of decisions made will be sent to Panel members marked as **DRAFT**. Once sign-off is received from the Chair, a follow-up email will be sent to Panel members confirming that the decision sheet is now final or, where the Chair has made amendments, a revised management decision sheet will be circulated marked as **FINAL**.
- 6.9 Copies will be put on the child's case record by the Panel Administrator.

Appendix 1 - Critical Friend Crib-sheet

Information required for critical friend conversations to ensure quality discussion and decision making for emergency admissions into care.

Please ensure that this information is obtained from Social Workers prior to conversations to avoid delay in placement finding.

These questions will formulate the conversation. If information is sent via email, please also include information below:

- Name
- DOB
- Current CP/ legal status
- Reason for request for accommodation
- How long has the Social Worker known about this situation?
- Is the IPS involved with the family?
- Risks
- Protective Factors
- Why is care the best option?
- Consent
- Potential for placement within family or friends
- Placement consideration

Appendix 2 - Supported Accommodation (16/17-year olds)

Stoke-on-Trent uses three main services for supported accommodation. It is used for 16/17-year olds with the aim of developing independence skills once the young person is 18.

Block Contract Provider - Concrete

Stoke-on-Trent has up to 40 beds (review pending) commissioned through Concrete inclusive of support, at present (01/07/20) there are 15 beds in use by children as once a child turns 18 the stock evolves into the supported housing model. Concrete will source new properties as required.

Concrete provide a range of supported accommodation:

- Victoria Place – Located in Stoke Town Centre, has staff on site and each YP has their own bedsit.
- Victoria House – Located in Stoke Town Centre, has staff on site and each YP has their own bedroom and shared kitchen and living area.
- Flats in the Community – Concrete have a number of flats accessible to them in the community and are able to locate properties in specific areas without staff on site, and they will provide floating support.

Category 1

Contract Description: Single Person accommodation + Support Hours

Cost:

- Accommodation £200-£1,000 per week.
- Support hours £15-£35 per hour
- Please note these are approximate costs

Detail:

- This is probably the most straightforward Category, where a Provider either sources single person accommodation specifically for an individual young person, or in a specific location.
- Support hours are purchased to meet the individual needs of the young person and need to be communicated and agreed very clearly at the point of the search and again confirmed at the point the placement is accepted.
- It should be made clear to Providers that support hours will be reviewed on a regular basis as the contract states support should be reviewed 6 weeks after placement and ongoing. The contract does not state a minimum or maximum number of hours.
- On some occasions, where accommodation is needed in a short timeframe, providers will use a property that they have already sourced. This will in turn limit the location.

Category 4

Contract Description: Shared 2+ accommodation; sleep-in staff on site from 10pm to 7am each night; individual daytime support hours to meet the individual needs, but with a minimum of 2 hours face to face support per week. Staff to be on call 24 hours to provide support if necessary, but NOT personal care

Cost:

- £700-£1,500 per week (Please note these are approximate costs)
- Support hours inclusive

Detail:

- This category offers a variety of options depending on the provider and the design and layout of the provision.
- The accommodation is normally in a fixed location, which limits the choice for young people in terms of location.
- There is only a small handful in Staffordshire and these may be fully occupied, other locations used for this type are in the Birmingham conurbations.
- The accommodation could be small studio rooms, en-suite with a small kitchenette that includes, microwave kettle, fridge with cupboard for crockery, utensils and food storage. A communal kitchen, laundry facilities. Alternatively, a young person may have a bedroom of their own which may be en-suite, or with shared bathroom. All other facilities are shared i.e. kitchen, maybe a communal gathering area and laundry facilities. In some scenarios providers will have a small cluster of self-contained flats within one complex with an office/staff accommodation located within the same building.
- Support hours – these are included in the overall fee; a provider must ensure that a young person has a minimum of 2 hours face to face support per week. There is no maximum so if a young person needs say 4 – 6 or more hours support per day then this should be provided within the cost quoted.
- It is not necessary to state the number of support hours when carrying out the search as the Provider should take this into account, however it is helpful to give a guide. The Social Worker should confirm at point of placement.

Category 5

Contract Description: Shared 2+ accommodation; staff on site 24/7 with daytime support hours to meet the individual young person's needs with a minimum of 2 hours face to face support per week. Additional staff are available to support individual young people within the community, but NOT Personal care.

- This is like the above however, there will be staff present 24/7, Staffordshire try and avoid as it is a step away from independence.
- This is used in rare occasions.

Cost:

- Are like the above but will be more at the top end or higher- £1,000+ per week.

The House Project

The House Project is where young people (aged 16+) in care work alongside adults to refurbish properties that become their home.

The ORCHIDS framework defines the House Project and makes it different to other accommodation options. It provides a clear operating framework that uses the energy, experience and creativity of young people and develops a supportive and safe base from which to explore the world and build a positive future.

The House Project utilises housing stock of Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

YMCA Accommodation Based Support

- Located in Hanley
- Supported Lodgings through the YMCA
- For children on the edge of care and out of the family home
- Aimed at those who do not need to become looked after
- Support provided by the YMCA
- Need to be willing to engage in some form of employment, education or training.
- Housing benefit and Income Support will need to be claimed, YMCA can assist with this.
- If benefits are not in payment at the point of admission, Placements will fund accommodation in the interim.
- The locality social work team will need to fund living expenses from S17 budgets until benefits are claimed.
- Capacity for emergency placements and out of hour's emergency placements through EDS.
- Will not accept referrals direct from social workers. ALL referrals will be managed via Placement Referrals Team
- Please note this contract is currently under review.