

Do I have a choice about being looked after?

Yes you do. An offer for you to be looked after 'in care' will only be made if there is no other suitable way of meeting all your needs. It is very important that you understand what being looked after 'in care' means, so that you can make an informed choice.

A Social Worker will have a discussion with you about S20 accommodation during the Child In Need assessment. You will not be forced to be looked after 'in care', your consent is needed. If you say no to an offer of becoming looked after 'in care', your housing application will be considered by the Housing Options Team and the options available to you.

Summary of our support:

- Home visits, as part of assessment process
- Referral to appropriate support services
- Planned accommodation moves
- Temporary or emergency accommodation if necessary
- Discussion around section 20 accommodation
- Individual support package based on assessed needs
- Mediation with family members



A guide for homeless 16 and 17 year olds

What is Homelessness?

Being homeless means having no fixed place to stay or no place to feel safe and secure.

Anyone can become homeless due to circumstances that may have been out of their control.

Together for Children (TfC), working on behalf of Sunderland City Council offer support to children and young people.

The team responsible for assessing the needs of young people identified as homeless is the Next Steps (Leaving Care) Team.

What support is available?

If you are faced with homelessness you may contact the:

- **Integrated Contact and Referral Team (ICRT) Advice Line on 0191 561 7007.** Support is open to all 16 and 17 year olds who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and ICRT provide information and support to find the best housing solution which may include staying in your current home, as well as emergency accommodation where appropriate.

Office hours are 8.30am – 5.15pm Monday to Thursday and 8.30am – 4.45pm on Fridays.

- **Sunderland City Council Housing Options Team on 0191 520 5551.** The Housing Options Team can provide information and advice for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Office at 31-32 Fawcett Street, Sunderland SR1 1RE

Next Steps (Leaving Care)

ICRT will refer you to Next Steps (Leaving Care) for ongoing support and assessment. If you are able to stay where you are for a little while, then this may provide time for workers to look at how you can be supported in the longer term. It might be that some sort of mediation is needed; for instance if you have fallen out with family members.

What happens next?

If you have nowhere to stay, we may be able to find you a bed within emergency accommodation. If this is not available, other temporary accommodation will be identified whilst your needs are being assessed. This is usually in the local area, but sometimes not (depending on what might be available).

We will then offer a Child In Need assessment, which will look at a number of areas to establish your support needs. We will discuss things such as health, education, employment.

All agencies that you work with during this time will support you in finding a solution to your housing issue, however, they are also committed to preventing homelessness where possible and will look at other avenues of support. This may include speaking to family members/relatives and all relevant parties along with looking at possible support services that could be put in place to assist with a return home, either permanently or whilst a planned, longer term accommodation option can be secured. This may include a joint visit where appropriate with the Housing Options team.

Family Group Conferencing is available, to support with Mediation between families, however you would need to be referred as part of your assessment to access this support.