

**Guidance Document**  
**Decision to Accommodate Young People 13 Years plus under Section 20.**

**In order to ensure we are looking after the right children at the right time there is a need to fully explore all available options for teenagers and their families before a decision is made to accommodate under Section 20.**

**Exceptions**

This criteria does not apply to:

- Cases where a Legal Planning Meeting has been held and thresholds have been met for issuing proceedings.
- Cases where there has been a significant incident resulting in the need for immediate accommodation- e.g.

*Suicide attempts*

*Serious injury to persons in the family*

*Disclosure of abuse where a return home would not be deemed to be in the young person's best interests.*

*Young person is abandoned/street homeless with no access to family/friend accommodation.*

In the examples above a meeting regarding continued Accommodation needs to take place within 48 hours following the criteria below unless it is deemed that the young person is at risk of significant harm if returned to the family home.

**Criteria**

When a worker identifies a crisis/series of incidents in a family home that require/s intervention:

**Threshold meeting**

Parent/s /family members/young person to be asked to attend an urgent meeting to consider options (within 48 hours or 72 hours if over a weekend. In principle no decision will be made to Accommodate until this meeting has taken place.

The meeting needs to be chaired by a Practice Manager/Service Manager (Team Manager in TYSS) in the appropriate service.

During the meeting:

All present to discuss possible solutions to include:

- Support into the home-this can vary according to families' needs.

- Possibility of young person staying with a relative/family friend under a private arrangement.
- Mediation arrangements
- Financial support

There must be a clear record that all options have been discussed and where appropriate the reasons why they may or may not work.

At the end of the meeting all options to support the family to stay together have been exhausted a written record should be made of the reasons.

### **Decision to Accommodate**

If it is felt that the only option is for the young person to have a period of time away from the family home the case should be brought to the next HARP. If a decision cannot wait until HARP the AD for Specialist Services must be contacted to discuss and agree Section 20 before any request to source a placement or HARP chair in their absence. For decisions out of hours the on call manager will be contacted for agreement and the case needs to be brought to the next HARP

A clear timescale for return/step-down where appropriate must be identified and discussed with the family/young person so that all are aware.

Where the family are asking for a break with a view to return a clear plan must be drawn up and dates identified for relevant actions within 72 hours. The plan should be in place for a maximum of 6 weeks.

### Young People 16 years plus

For young people aged 16 plus where the young person has the skills and level of maturity to live semi-independently/independently the option of alternative housing should be explored before any decision to pursue Section 20

e.g.

Parents to act as Guarantor for rent deposit to source alternative accommodation

Young person to be presented as homeless

### Young People 17.5 years plus

The decision to Accommodate will only be made where there is clear evidence that a period of time in Local Authority Care will have a clear and measurable benefit to the young person.