



Guidance Summary for Social Workers for Homelessness in 16-17 Year Olds

Recognise Youth Homelessness as a Hidden Issue

Be aware that many 16 -17-year olds experiencing homelessness may not be immediately visible, as they might stay with friends or in unstable situations- [always be vigilant to signs of hidden homelessness](#).

Ensure a Joint Response

When a young person presents as homeless, [there must be a joint assessment](#) involving children's social care and housing teams. Assess need together, explore accommodation options and safeguard the child.

Explain Accommodation Options Clearly

Ensure the young person [fully understands their legal rights](#) and the different accommodation options:

- Section 20 – becoming a looked-after child with full support and leaving care entitlements.
- Section 17 – support as a child in need with fewer long-term entitlements.
- Housing Act 1996 (Part 7) – housing through the local authority but without social care involvement.

Avoid steering young people away from Section 20 and provide balanced, transparent information.

Offer Independent Advocacy

Ensure the child knows they have a right to an independent advocate to help them understand their options.

[Actively offer advocacy](#), particularly if the child is considering rejecting section 20 support. You should monitor the uptake and effectiveness of advocacy services and strive to ensure advocates are independent and empowered to challenge decisions.

Assess Readiness for Independence

Before placing a young person in semi-independent or independent accommodation, assess their readiness to live alone. You should [make this a formal, recorded part of the assessment process](#) and arrange follow-up support and checks to ensure they are managing and safe.

Prioritise Suitable, Safe Accommodation

Avoid the use of bed and breakfasts (B&Bs) or inappropriate hostels and [ensure supported accommodation is safe and meets the child's needs](#), whether regulated or not. Be mindful of the evolving impact of Ofsted's regulation of supported accommodation, particularly around the availability and quality of placements.

Co-Produce and Provide Information

Involve young people in shaping the services and information provided to others and [provide clear, accessible resources](#) explaining their rights, choices, and support options.

Monitor and Reflect

Reflect on whether practice in your area encourages informed choices and [advocate for regular reviews of decision-making processes](#), particularly regarding advocacy, section 20 uptake, and placement quality.