

Central Bedfordshire Children's Services

Parent's Guide to Section 20

We are asking you to agree to your child becoming accommodated by the Local Authority under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989.

Section 20 accommodation means that you agree to your child staying with someone else. This can be a friend or family member approved by the Local Authority or a foster carer. The full details will be in the written agreement which we have discussed with you.

Everyone who has parental responsibility (PR) for your child needs to either agree or not object to them being accommodated.

Agreeing to Section 20 accommodation for your child does not give the Local Authority parental responsibility (PR) for your child. This means that the Local Authority cannot make decisions about your child unless you agree. When you sign the forms to agree to section 20 accommodation, we will ask you to consider whether we can take some steps in relation to healthcare if we cannot reach you. This is called delegating parental responsibility. You can choose whether to do this.

This is a temporary arrangement where the Local Authority will work with you. This is often whilst we carry out further investigations so that decisions can be made about the best way to ensure that your child is safe.

You do not have to agree to this happening. You have a choice to say no.

You can change your mind at a later date and bring the section 20 agreement to an end at any time.

We recommend that you seek legal advice about this agreement as soon as you are able to do so. If you cannot get legal advice straight away, we advise that you speak to a family member or friend about this. We can give you a list of local independent specialist solicitors who can help you.

If you do not agree to section 20 accommodation and the local authority consider that your child will be unsafe in your care then the Local Authority may seek the support of the police and the court to consider what to do next to keep your child safe.