

Secure Accommodation

What is secure accommodation?

A Secure Accommodation Unit is a residential placement where you are prevented from leaving.

Who can be placed in secure accommodation?

Only children or young people aged between 13 and 18 who are in care or accommodated by social care can be placed in secure accommodation.

Can you be forced to go into secure accommodation?

- Yes, but social care can only make you stay in secure accommodation for 72 hours (3 days) without the court's permission.
- If social care think that you need to stay in secure accommodation longer, they will have to ask the Court to make an Order giving them permission to keep you there for a longer period.

Why might social care want to keep you in Secure Accommodation?

There may be a number of reasons, for example, you have run away from a placement, you have attempted suicide or hurt yourself or you might hurt other people.

Can you speak to your solicitor?

- Yes. You should contact your solicitor as soon as an application is made to the court or you are placed in a Secure Unit, if that happens before you go to court.
- You are entitled to speak to your solicitor before an order is made, if you want to.

Is there anyone else you can contact?

- Yes, you can ask to see an independent visitor or an advocate. [National Youth Advocacy Service](#) (NYAS).
- Our [Southend Health Information Portal \(SHIP\)](#) website has further information about support groups and services. Please click here to access [SHIP](#).

What happens at Court?

- If social care feel you need to stay in secure accommodation, they will apply to the Court for an Order giving them permission to keep you there.
- You should have your solicitor there.
- You are entitled to be in court at the hearing unless the judge feels you will cause trouble, but this will depend on the judge.
- The Court will appoint a Children's Guardian to report to the Court about your interests.
- The Court will decide whether you can be kept in secure accommodation.
- Your solicitor will be able to help you with any problems you have when you are in secure, even after the order is made.
- The Court cannot make an order unless you have a chance to talk to a solicitor if you want one.

How long can the Court make you stay in secure accommodation?

- On the first application, the Court can make an order for up to 3 months.
- After this, the Court can allow the social care to keep you in secure accommodation for up to 6 months at a time.

How does the Court decide whether the social care should be allowed to keep you in secure accommodation?

The Court can make a Secure Accommodation Order when:

- A young person has a history of running away and is likely to run away from any other kind of home or children's unit and when running away places him/herself in danger; or
- If the young person is not kept in secure accommodation, he/she is likely to injure himself or other people.

You cannot be placed in secure accommodation for running away only.

- The Court has to be satisfied that you are at risk of significant harm when you run away.
- Secure accommodation is used for the purposes of protecting you or others from you, not for the purposes of punishing you.

Can you still see your family and friends?

- Your social worker should arrange for you to see your family and important friends.
- If you are not satisfied with these arrangements suggested by your social worker, you should contact your solicitor (see section on Contact).
- There will be regular meetings while you are in secure, when issues like these can be raised. At these meetings you can discuss whether or not you should still be in secure, plans for the future, as well as who you can see.

Will you still be able to go to school?

Social care must make sure that you can receive education whilst you are in secure accommodation.