

West Sussex Children's Services Procedures Manual

Local Authority's Sufficiency Duty - Accommodation for Children Looked After

RELATED GUIDANCE

[Sufficiency: Statutory Guidance on Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children \(2010\)](#) 

AMENDMENT

This chapter was refreshed in May 2025 in line with How Local Authorities and Children's Homes Can Achieve Stability and Permanence for Children with Complex Needs (Ofsted).

May 1, 2025

1. What is the Sufficiency Duty?

Each Local Authority providing children's services must now take steps that secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within its area to meet the needs of children that it is looking after and children whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation in the local authority area. This is referred to as 'the sufficiency duty'.

The sufficiency duty, therefore, applies in respect of all children who are looked after. However, it also applies to children in need who are at risk of care or custody (sometimes referred to as children 'on the edge of care'). This acknowledges the importance - both for improving outcomes for children and in having sufficient accommodation to meet their needs - of taking earlier, preventive action to support children and families so that fewer children become Looked After.

From April 2010, local authorities had to include in relevant commissioning strategies their plans for meeting the sufficiency duty.

From April 2011, working with their Children's Trust partners, local authorities must be in a position to carry out the sufficiency duty.

2. The Most Appropriate Placement

Children should not be moved from out of authority placements for the sole purpose of meeting the sufficiency duty if their needs are being met by the existing range of services.

The overriding factor is that the placement must be the most appropriate placement available. Next, preference must be given to a placement with a friend, relative or other person connected with the child and who is a local authority foster carer. Failing that, a placement must be found, so far as reasonably practicable in all circumstances, that:

- Is near the child's home;
- Does not disrupt his/her education or training;
- Enables the child to live with an accommodated sibling;
- Where the child is disabled/or has multiple needs, does it meet the needs of that child (please see information in [Section 2.1, Additional Considerations Where a Child Has Multiple Needs](#) below); and
- Is within the local authority's area, unless that is not reasonably practicable.

There is no order of priority within the categories listed in the bullet points above. All of these are factors that have to be taken into account. For example, if placing a child within his/her area conflicted with placing him or her near home or with a sibling, or which disrupted his/her education, the