

OUT-OF-HOURS EMERGENCY REFERRALS JSP26



INTRODUCTION

Joseph House must be prepared to respond to emergency referrals outside of standard working hours to ensure that vulnerable children in crisis can access safe, temporary accommodation. Out-of-hours referrals typically occur when a child requires immediate placement due to unforeseen circumstances that put their safety or well-being at risk. These situations may arise due to family breakdowns, safeguarding concerns, placement disruptions, or urgent decisions made by social care teams, the police, or the emergency duty team (EDT).

Unlike planned placements, emergency referrals often involve limited background information, making it essential for KPMS to conduct rapid assessments while prioritising the children's safety and emotional needs.

The child may arrive feeling distressed, confused, or fearful, requiring a sensitive and trauma informed response from staff. Additionally, the emergency nature of these placements means that staff must carefully balance the immediate needs of the referred child with the stability and wellbeing of the home's existing residents.

This policy outlines the process for handling emergency referrals to Joseph House outside of standard working hours. It ensures that all placements made into the designated emergency bed are appropriate, meet Ofsted regulatory requirements under The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015, and prioritise the safety and well-being of the referred child and the resident children.

POLICY & SCOPE

RELEVANT POLICIES

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- **Delivering Care & Support (JSP11)**
- **Referrals & New Placements policy (JSP24)**

SCOPE

This policy applies to all out-of-hours referrals received by the home and must be followed by all team members at Joseph House. A copy of this policy is also available to EDT to ensure both parties can work in partnership to ensure the safe and appropriate handling of such referrals.

PROCEDURES

Resources

1. Referral process

Out-of-hours referrals are made to Business Support and Development at 07801 927576. If Business Support and Development cannot be reached, EDT will call the Director of Services & Operations at 07788 211290. Referrals should always be made centrally and not directly to the home. EDT will provide all the information available to them to allow KPMS to make an informed impact assessment.

2. Criteria for accepting an emergency referral

Emergency placements are only accepted when:

- The child is within the approved age range (11 -17) and meets the referral criteria as outlined in the Statement of Purpose
- The child does not present an immediate and unmanageable risk to themselves, staff, or other residents
- The home has capacity, and the placement does not compromise the safety and stability of existing residents

Before accepting a referral, KPMS must obtain:

- The child's name, age, and legal status
- Reason for placement and immediate risks
- Details of any known health or behavioural concerns, with particular attention paid to any known CCE, CSE, gang affiliations or sexualised behaviour risks
- Contact details for the responsible social worker
- Expected duration of stay (with confirmation that a reassessment will occur the next working day)

PROCEDURES CONT.

3. Decision-making process

Decisions to accept a referral can only be made by one of the following:

- Responsible Individual
- Director of Services & Operations
- Social Work Service Manager
- Registered Manager

The on-call director or manager must assess the referral against the eligibility criteria and conduct an impact assessment on the children placed in the home. If approved, EDT will confirm all known information in writing, and the logistics will be planned.

4. Supporting and welcoming the child

To ensure the child feels safe, supported, and welcomed upon arrival, the team will:

- Prepare for their arrival: Ensure the emergency bedroom is ready with clean bedding, appropriate clothing if needed, and personal care items
- Support EDT with transport logistics: Where possible, team members will support with meeting the child and bringing them to Joseph House
- Greet them warmly: Offer reassurance, introduce them to staff, and explain who will be looking after them
- Provide immediate essentials: Offer food, a drink, and access to a shower or bath.
- Explain the environment: Give a simple tour of the home, including their room, communal areas, and bathroom, setting ground rules along the way, including respecting other residents' privacy and space
- Respect their emotional state: Understand that they may be scared, confused, or upset. Offer space but be available for comfort and support
- Respect cultural and personal needs: Wherever possible, accommodate dietary, religious, or personal preferences

PROCEDURES CONT.

5. Safeguarding & compliance

- The emergency placement must not exceed the agreed short-term period (holding placement only)
- Any safeguarding concerns must be reported as per the home's safeguarding policy
- All documentation related to the placement must be completed in line with Ofsted regulations and the relevant parts of the Referrals & New Placements policy (JSP24)
- As emergency referrals often have less detailed information to allow us to assess risk, team members will ensure constant supervision on each floor to monitor initial interactions with existing residents to ensure all children are safeguarded
- Team members should refer to each resident child's Assessment and Development Plans to consider managing their individual needs during the intake of an emergency referral, including any relevant social stories to help them adjust

6. Future planning

- The local authority must review the placement and determine the next steps the next working day, including the care planning and placement decisions
- The allocated IHSW must prepare a summary of the child's stay, including any incidents, concerns, or support needs identified
- Where possible, a professionals meeting will be convened to share information and plan the logistics of the child's move
- In rare cases, and where occupancy levels allow, it may be deemed in the child's best interests to remain at Joseph House. This will be carefully considered by KPMS and the local authority, and in this event, the full Referrals & New Placements policy (JSP24) and associated processes will be followed

Status of this Policy

This policy has been equality impact assessed to ensure that it does not adversely affect staff and stakeholders

Review date: February 2025

Next review date: February 2026