



## **I have been asked to sign a Section 20 agreement in relation to my child, what is this/ should I sign it?**

Section 20 of the Children's Act 1989 is a voluntary arrangement made between the Local Authority and parents (or those with parental responsibility). The agreement allows the Local Authority to provide temporary accommodation for the child with family, friends or a Local Authority approved foster carer. It can be used as a short-term solution to ensure the child is safe, whilst the Local Authority continues investigations.

This arrangement is temporary and can be withdrawn at any time, the child must then be returned to their parent's care.

There are a number of reasons why you may be asked to consider agreeing to section 20, this can include:

- If you experience poor mental health and need time to recover
- If you have bail conditions that prevent you caring for children
- If you and the child are homeless
- If you are struggling to manage the child's behaviour
- If there has been an allegation that requires further exploration by the police or Local Authority
- If the child has experienced abuse or neglect



A section 20 arrangement enables parents to retain parental responsibility for the child, whilst ensuring the child is safe. It can provide respite to parents who may be struggling.

It can also enable the Local Authority to complete assessments without having to make an application to formally remove the child from their parents' care. However, it can become a longer arrangement which may not be in the child's best interests.

You may be asked to agree to this arrangement as part of a child protection plan or pre-proceedings process. It is important you understand what this means for you and your children and that you to obtain legal advice so you can make an informed decision.

## **How we can help?**

At Smith Partnership, we can help you throughout the Local Authority's involvement. We have solicitors across the East Midlands who are experienced in section 20 agreements. If you would like to discuss this further, please contact us on 0330 123 1229.