

Secure Welfare Coordination Unit Referral

Date of referral
Referring local authority Hampshire
Court applying to for S.25 Portsmouth
Primary reason for order History of absconding or likely to abscond from other accommodation
Expected/requested start date of placement 18/02/2026

Social worker

Name Stephen Brown
Telephone number 01962 846432
Additional phone number 01962 123476
Mobile number 07987123456
Additional mobile number 0370 779 5470
Secure email Stephen.Brown@hants.gov.uk

Team manager

Name Andrew McCabe
Telephone number 01962 846432
Additional phone number 03123097189
Mobile number 07987654321
Additional mobile number
Secure email Andrew.McCabe@hants.gov.uk

Placements team

Name Hampshire Placements Team
Telephone number 01962 987654
Additional phone number
Mobile number 07987651479
Additional mobile number
Secure email placements@hants.gov.uk

IRO

Is there an IRO contact for this referral? Yes
Name Moira Blackwell
Telephone number 01962 863432
Additional phone number
Mobile number 03370234965
Additional mobile number
Secure email Moira.Blackwell@hants.gov.uk

YOT worker

Is there any current involvement with the Youth Offending Team (YOT)? Yes
Name Sandra Rush
Telephone number 01963 846432

Additional phone number	
Mobile number	07898840606
Additional mobile number	
Secure email	Sandra.Rush@hants.gov.uk

Is the young person:

Currently in hospital	No
Currently missing	Yes
Currently in Police custody/on Remand	No
Agreement to pay a bed retainer in principle	Yes
Subject to a current Threat to Life Warning or Osman Warning from the Police	No

Personal information

Legal first name	Joseph
Legal last name	Doe
Preferred name	Joe
NHS number	7012348745
Social care system ID	7741
Gender	Male
Ethnicity	Black - British
Date of birth	16/04/2011
Age	14
Religion	No Religion
First language	English
Interpreter required	No
Height	5ft 7"
Weight	10 stone
Legal status	Full care order
Do you intent to initially place under the 72-hour agreement?	No

For under 13's: Secretary of State/Welsh Ministerial approval

Applied for
Granted

Placement history

Current placement

Placement type	CLA - A children's home registered with Ofsted
Start date of current placement	04/02/2026
Is the young person subject to a DoL Order in this placement?	Yes
Additional staffing levels	3:1
Contact person	Emilio Hill
Tel No/Email	Emilio.Hill@hants.gov.uk

Previous placement

Placement type	CLA - A children's home registered with Ofsted
Start date of previous placement	12/04/2025
End date of previous placement	03/02/2026
Additional staffing levels	2:1
Contact person	Roberta Weston
Tel No/Email	Roberta.Weston@hants.gov.uk

Placement history

Placement type	Start date	End date
CLA - Foster Care including Local Authority and Independent Foster Care agencies	01/04/2021	03/10/2021
CLA - Placed with Parents	03/10/2021	01/12/2021
CLA - Foster Care including Local Authority and Independent Foster Care agencies	01/12/2021	23/03/2022
CLA - Foster Care including Local Authority and Independent Foster Care agencies	23/03/2022	15/08/2022
CLA - A children's home registered with Ofsted	15/08/2022	14/06/2024
CLA - A children's home registered with Ofsted	14/06/2024	28/08/2024
CLA - A children's home registered with Ofsted	28/08/2024	15/09/2024
CLA - Other	15/09/2024	12/04/2025

Has the young person been in secure welfare, justice or a No
secure mental health placement before?

At what age did the young person first become known to 8
children's services?

At what age did the young person first come into care? 9

Young person overview

Pen picture

Joseph is a 14 year old boy who prefers to be known as Joe, and he responds positively when adults respect this. Joe is bright, perceptive and has a strong internal sense of loyalty and fairness. When he feels unheard or dismissed, Joe will confidently stand up for himself, asserting his views clearly and passionately, although this can sometimes be mistaken for disobedience.

Joe has struggled with stability throughout his life, having experienced multiple foster care and residential placements since entering care at 9 years old. Despite this, he has remained resilient and continues to show an ability to form meaningful relationships when he feels safe. Joe's current staff team have observed that, when trust is established, he can be reflective, take on board guidance, and engage in calm, mature conversations.

Joe is sociable and gravitates naturally toward people he clicks with. He enjoys being around others and will seek out company when he feels comfortable. He is particularly expressive when talking about things he's passionate about, such as music, drawing, and his favourite online games.

Joe takes pride in his appearance and often presents himself confidently, with a keen sense of style that reflects his identity. He likes to appear put together, and this is often one of the first signs that he is feeling settled.

Although Joe's history includes behaviours that challenge, such as absconding, substance misuse, and involvement with negative peer groups, he has shown that, in the right environment, he is capable of managing conflict more constructively. With trusted adults, he can reflect on incidents, share his perspective openly, and consider alternative ways of handling situations. This demonstrates significant potential for growth when supported consistently.

Joe responds best to adults who are firm but fair, who respect his boundaries, and who remain calm even when he struggles. With this approach, Joe is capable of forming strong, positive relationships and making significant progress. He has many strengths, including his resilience, creativity, and ability to connect with others when he feels safe.

ACE's

Evidence of verbal or emotional abuse Yes

Physical abuse	Yes
Sexual abuse	No
Domestic abuse	Yes
Parental substance misuse	Yes
Loss of a parent (death or separation)	Yes
Parental mental illness	Yes
Physical or emotional neglect	Yes
Parental criminal behaviour or imprisonment	Yes
Separation from parent due to parental deportation or detainment	No
Young person is a parent	No
Bereavement of a significant person	Yes

Background/family information

Joe has been known to children's services since the age of 8. He was accommodated at 9 years old following persistent and significant concerns with his home life. He has been exposed to verbal and emotional abuse, often experiencing shouting, criticism, and unpredictable reactions from caregivers. He was also subject to episodes of physical abuse, particularly during times when parental substance misuse was present, leaving Joe fearful and hypervigilant within his own home.

Neglect was a persistent theme, with Joe frequently left without adequate supervision, inconsistent meals, or routine. Emotional neglect was also evident; Joe rarely received comfort, reassurance, or stable, attuned caregiving. These unmet needs left him to manage his own emotions from a young age, without the secure attachment relationships necessary for emotional development.

Joe also lived in an environment where domestic violence between adults was both frequent and intense. He witnessed verbal altercations, threats, and physical assaults, often occurring in proximity to him. Joe's presentation strongly reflects the impacts of chronic exposure to fear, instability, and unpredictability. The home environment was further destabilised by parental substance misuse, with both caregivers experiencing longstanding issues with alcohol and drugs. This resulted in inconsistent supervision, unpredictable mood changes, and long periods of adult unavailability. Alongside this, parental mental health difficulties, including periods of low mood, emotional volatility, and withdrawal, meant Joe's emotional needs went unmet, and he sometimes found himself attempting to manage or avoid adult conflict.

Joe was also exposed to parental criminal behaviour, including offences linked to substance misuse and violence. Police involvement in the home was not uncommon, normalising unsafe adults and environments during Joe's formative years. This exposure has influenced Joe's understanding of relationships, loyalty, and conflict, and contributes significantly to the vulnerabilities exploited by others in later adolescence.

Compounding these traumatic experiences, Joe suffered the bereavement of a close friend shortly before entering care. His unresolved bereavement has contributed to ongoing emotional instability and feelings of abandonment. There have been efforts to work with Joe's family to assess whether reunification might be possible. However, due to ongoing parental instability, unresolved substance misuse, and continued emotional volatility within the home, reunification has not been viable. When contact has occurred, Joe has often shown signs of heightened distress, or mistrust, and on several occasions he has expressed that he does not feel emotionally safe with his parents. Consequently, Joe currently does not wish to have contact with family members.

Due to ongoing concerns about Joe's vulnerability, his escalating risk-taking behaviour, and suspected criminal exploitation, safeguarding measures, including a DoL order were put in place to keep him safe. His current placement is designed to offer high levels of supervision and consistency.

Despite the challenges he faces, Joe has shown that with the right relational environment he can build trust with adults and begin to reflect on his experiences. He responds best to staff who are patient, emotionally attuned, and who can offer structure without confrontation. While his earlier life experiences continue to influence his current behaviour, Joe has demonstrated resilience and the ability to make progress when supported in a trauma-informed way.

What recent events led to a secure welfare placement being required?

In his most recent placement, Joe initially settled but soon began absconding for short periods and often returned under the influence of substances. Staff became increasingly concerned that he was meeting with older individuals and being criminally exploited. After an incident where Joe ran off during an external activity and was later seen entering a car with older males, the placement issued notice due to their inability to keep him safe. Joe was moved to another residential setting, but he did not engage and his absconding, substance misuse, and aggression escalated. This included a serious incident involving fire-setting, after which the placement felt they could no longer manage his

risks. He is now placed under a DoL order in his current home, but this has had limited impact, and Joe is currently missing.

Presenting behaviours

Violent/challenging behaviours including fire setting

Joe can be argumentative and will push back strongly against rules or expectations, often attempting to negotiate alternative outcomes or “make deals” to avoid boundaries being implemented. Joe regularly challenges authority and becomes confrontational when he feels controlled or unheard. He can be verbally aggressive, uses swearing frequently, and has made threats to hit out at others when frustrated or distressed.

Joe has a history of physical aggression both in the community and in placement.

Earlier incidents (around age 10–12) involved fights with peers, but in recent years his aggression has become more directed toward adults responsible for supervising him.

There have been occasions in residential settings where Joe has punched, kicked, or pushed staff during moments of emotional dysregulation. There was also an incident where he attempted to set fire to items in the communal lounge following an argument with another young person. Staff report this was likely an impulsive act driven by anger rather than planned intent.

Triggers for Joe’s violence typically centre around being asked to do something he does not want to do, being told “no,” or being reminded of past trauma. Joe’s response in these moments is often immediate, impulsive, and driven by a strong fight or flight reaction. After incidents, he can show remorse but often struggles to fully reflect on the consequences of his actions.

Self-harm & suicide attempts

None known. Although Joe has expressed feelings of hopelessness and frustration about his family situation and placement instability, there have been no recorded incidents of self-harm or suicide attempts, and no prolonged low mood documented by placements.

Substance misuse

Joe reports first using cannabis at around 12 years old and continues to use it regularly. He also smokes cigarettes. He often returns to placement smelling strongly of cannabis or displaying intoxication. His alcohol use is opportunistic and usually occurs when drinking with peers in the community. Joe has hinted at occasional use of harder substances, but there is no verified evidence of this. The local authority does not anticipate severe withdrawal symptoms if he were placed in a secure setting.

Professionals believe Joe’s substance misuse is directly linked to criminal exploitation. He is suspected to have been offered drugs initially as a method of control, resulting in him building up a drug debt he could not repay. Joe does not believe he has a problem with substances and views his use as normal “for someone his age.”

Sexually harmful behaviour

None.

Sexualised behaviour and/or child sexual exploitation

None known, although his frequent absences and association with older peers remain a general safeguarding concern.

Absconding

Joe struggles significantly with boundaries around safety and returns to placement. He frequently leaves without

permission, often staying out overnight or for several days. Prior to his DoL order, he was missing multiple times a week. Since the DoL order, absconding has remained an issue, though more difficult for him, he often stays missing for longer periods and returns only briefly for food or a shower. In the days leading up to his most recent missing episode, Joe made comments “I’ll go where people actually give a f** about me”.

Gang affiliation/criminal exploitation

Joe is believed to be under significant and sustained criminal exploitation by older males, with increasing evidence that he is becoming embedded within local gang networks, though we do not have the names for these. His missing episodes, sudden access to expensive clothing, unexplained cash, and possession of multiple mobile phones all strongly indicate active exploitation. Joe is frequently seen in the company of older peers suspected of involvement in organised criminal activity, and staff believe these individuals have a high level of control over him. Joe has admitted to carrying a knife “for protection,” which raises serious concerns about the risks he both faces and poses. He has been found in other cities with no reasonable explanation, and police contact has involved instances of suspected drug possession and involvement in violent incidents.

Joe describes these older associates as “family” and expresses unwavering loyalty toward them which heightens the likelihood that he is being manipulated through a combination of fear, coercion, and a perceived sense of belonging. His escalating absences, increased aggression, and willingness to place himself at extreme risk all suggest he is being directed by exploiters and may be involved in drug running and other criminal activity. Given the combination of grooming indicators, his age, his vulnerabilities, and patterns of behaviour, professionals are extremely concerned that Joe is being criminally exploited and is at very high risk of significant harm.

Is the young person subject to a Prevent or CONTEST arrangement? No

Is the young person subject to NRM or has a referral been made? Yes

Care planning

Summary of present care plan

The local authority’s immediate plan is to find Joe and return him to his current placement while an urgent search takes place for a secure placement that can keep him safe from criminal exploitation. His current placement will increase staffing and supervision to manage the significant risks he poses and faces, particularly around absconding and gang affiliation.

The goal of secure accommodation is to stabilize Joe, re-establish routine, and disrupt the influence of exploiters. Once stable, the plan is for Joe to transition into a specialist residential placement for young people at high risk of exploitation, where he can receive consistent boundaries, therapeutic support, and tailored CCE intervention. Longer term, the care plan aims to help Joe develop emotional regulation, rebuild safe relationships, and re-engage with education or meaningful activities, with future family contact considered only if safe and in line with Joe’s wishes.

First aim of placement

The secure placement will complete focused work with Joe on gang affiliation and criminal exploitation. The aim is to help him recognise manipulation, drug debt, and the risks he places on himself and others. This will include education

around offending behaviour, emotional regulation, and anger management, with progress measured through his engagement in sessions and changes in his reactions to situations that previously led to aggression or absconding.

Second aim of placement

The placement will provide structured substance misuse education to help Joe understand the health risks, legal consequences, and links between drug use and exploitation. The secure environment will support him to abstain from substances while developing healthier attitudes. Progress will be measured through his engagement in sessions, increased insight, and reduced reliance on substances upon transition to an open placement.

Third aim of placement

The secure placement aims to establish Joe's engagement with education through a consistent daily routine. Joe will be encouraged to participate in learning, with the goal of improving attendance, academic engagement, and helping him identify a future educational or vocational pathway. Progress will be measured through attendance, participation, and observable improvement in learning.

What is your proposed exit and transition plan from a secure placement?

Transition planning for Joe will begin as soon as he enters secure, as this is a short term placement. The current plan is for Joe to move on to a specialist residential placement for children at high risk of criminal exploitation, ideally out of area to break links with harmful peers. Options will focus on small, highly supervised homes with strong CCE expertise.

The transition will be coordinated by Joe's social worker, the secure placement team, and the Exploitation and Missing Team, alongside education and health professionals. A phased transition will be arranged once a suitable placement is identified, with multi agency reviews held throughout the secure stay to ensure the next placement is confirmed before discharge.

Interaction techniques

Joe's interactions with others are shaped by his history of trauma, placement instability, and exploitation. With peers, he tends to gravitate toward those he perceives as confident, older, or aligned with the lifestyle he admires. This can place him at significant risk of exploitation, as he is highly influenced by peers who offer him status or belonging. With trusted adults, Joe can be articulate, engaging, and reflective, but he requires time and consistency before he feels safe enough to interact calmly.

Joe responds best to calm, consistent, and relational approaches. Clear explanations, predictable routines, and offering choices help reduce escalation. Staff who remain patient, respectful, and avoid power struggles are more successful in maintaining positive engagement. Joe is likely to test boundaries early on but will engage well with adults who build trust and maintain emotional consistency. A trauma informed, non confrontational style, alongside clear structure, will support safer interactions with peers and professionals.

Authoritative, punitive, or confrontational approaches cause Joe to shut down or escalate. Raised voices, sudden changes in routine, or conflicting messages between staff increase distress and can trigger aggression or absconding.

What are the young person's views/wishes/feelings regarding being in secure?

Joe has been made aware of the local authority's intention to apply for a secure welfare placement. He has expressed that he does not want to be in secure and feels that it is "unfair" and that staff are "trying to control" him. Joe believes he can keep himself safe and does not fully recognise the risks linked to exploitation, absconding, or the people he associates with in the community. He has said he prefers being with his peers rather than in a placement, which reflects the influence exploiters currently have over him.

When the risks and reasons for the application were explained, Joe became dismissive and stated he "doesn't care what happens," though this is consistent with his difficulty acknowledging vulnerability. He has, however, expressed that he would like more freedom and wants professionals to "trust" him. At this stage, Joe does not agree with the plan for secure but is aware of the application and the reasons behind it.

Approved contacts for young person

Name	Relationship	PR	Preferred contact number	Phone	Letter	Visit	Address
April Smith	Previous Foster Carer	No	07401234567	Yes	Yes	Yes	Elizabeth II Court, The Castle, Winchester SO23 8UG

Health

Medical information

Current illness/injury	None known.
Current medication/treatment	Prescribed brown inhaler for asthma
Current tobacco use	Approximately 5 cigarettes a day and will seek to vape whenever he can.
Current drug use	Daily cannabis use, unknown quantities. He has previously reported occasional cocaine use although there is no evidence of this.
Current alcohol use	Self reports to drink alcohol frequently when missing, most commonly spirits.
Is a detox from substances required?	The local authority does not anticipate withdrawal
Medical conditions	Hay fever, asthma
Physical conditions	None known
Treatment in the last 12 months	None
Special dietary requirements	None
Undiagnosed/suspected physical conditions	No
Encopresis	No
Enuretic	No
Visually impaired	No
Hearing impaired	No
Vaccinations	Up to date with routine NHS vaccinations, including COVID 19 vaccinations and had his Td/IPV booster earlier this year. Is due MenACWY vaccine later this year.
Allergies	Grass pollen. This can exacerbate his asthma symptoms.
Asthma	Yes. Has brown puff for this which he is supposed to take daily, however he can struggle to remember this or to see its importance.
Epilepsy	No
Diabetes	No
Dental requirements/orthodontics	None known although he hasn't been to the dentist for a while now due to absconding and is overdue a checkup.

Has the young person been diagnosed with the following:

A learning disability	No
Autism	No

Is the young person suspected to have the following:

A learning disability	No
Autism	No
If yes, provide details	

Mental health & neurodiversity

Assessment status	N/A
When (date)	
Does the young person have any diagnosed mental health or neurodivergent conditions?	No

Does the young person have any suspected mental health or neurodivergent conditions? No

Previous/current mental health service involvement

Inpatient CAMHS (e.g. Tier 4) No
 Community CAMHS offered No
 Community CAMHS engaged N/A
 Eating disorder service No
 Other mental health input No. Joe's mental health seems to be okay and no assessments have been requested currently. Although this should be monitored as he is very emotionally vulnerable.

Youth justice

Summary of all offences

Date	Offence	Outcome
15/03/2025	Possession of Class B (Cannabis)	Community Resolution
15/07/2025	Common assault against another peer in placement	No Further Action
23/08/2025	Possession of Class B (Cannabis)	Community Resolution
11/11/2025	Common Assault against Staff	Pending - under investigation

Education

Known to the local authority's virtual school Yes
 Virtual school head name Annabelle Symmonds
 Virtual school head contact details Annabelle.symmonds@hants.gov.uk
 Currently on roll at school No
 Currently educated other than school No
 Currently excluded No
 EHCP (previously SEN Statement) No
 Current SEN status No special educational need
 Any other relevant information Joe is currently NEET and has been out of education for an extended period due to absconding, criminal exploitation, and the breakdown of multiple placements. He struggles with concentration, emotional regulation and routine, which impacts his ability to sustain education. Despite this, Joe has previously shown interest in practical and creative subjects, particularly music and art, and responds best to small group or one to one learning environments. A secure placement offers an opportunity to re-establish routine and re-engage him in tailored educational provision.

Religious/cultural needs

Are there any specific cultural, religious, or ethnic considerations to take into account? Joe is not particularly religious, but he does celebrate his birthday and Christmas.

Assessments

N/A

Any other relevant information