



TRAFFORD
COUNCIL

Services for Children, Young People and Families

Children in care

Children's homes

Access to Residential Files

Reviewed April 2020

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Date to be Reviewed: January 2022

Procedure

This procedure applies to all children's personal files at the children's home (i.e. the Individual file, Health file and Education file). If a child requests access to other files the CIC Access to Records procedures must be followed.

This procedure should be used in conjunction with Trafford Children's Service Procedure 2.3 Access to Records.

All personal residential files should be kept securely in a locked drawer or cabinet. Recording on these files should be clear and regularly monitored by the Registered Manager.

Each child must have a permanent private record of their history and progress in residential care which, in accordance with legal requirements, can be seen by the child when appropriate.

Children have the right to know and see what is written about them except for:

- Confidential information
- Third party information

A child's access to records should also take account of their age/understanding and whether access would cause serious harm to a particular worker or the child's mental/physical health.

If English is not a child's first language an interpreter may be required to be present. If a child cannot read, the file may need to be read to them.

Children should be encouraged to see and contribute to their records, so that they have a sense of the records 'belonging to them'. Reading records and sharing them can provide children/young people with a fuller understanding of themselves and their situation.

Staff should always be present when children/young people have access to their records. Staff should offer appropriate support to the child/young person.

Access to files

Each young person should be made aware by their Link Worker that their personal residential record is their record. They may read their files discuss the contents, correct errors, and add personal information.

Link Workers should offer to spend time with a child/young person whilst they read their file.

When a child requests to read their file the Registered Manager should ensure that

- Any confidential or third party material is removed (such material should be marked confidential and stored at the back of each file for easy removal)
- The Link Worker or another appropriate member of staff is available to support the child/young person
- Any other support required (e.g. interpretation) is available

The Link-Worker or member of staff supervising and assisting the young person in reading their file should remain with them whilst they have access to the file and ensure that:

- The child has somewhere suitable and private for the purpose
- No other child is allowed by the child to read their file
- The file remains safe and secure. If a child might remove items or vandalise the file,
- Staff are to be vigilant at all times to ensure a child does not vandalise or remove items from the file.
- The file is not removed from the Home

The Link-worker or member of staff supervising and assisting the child in reading their file should:

- Ensure they have sufficient time to support the child throughout the access time
- Assist the child's understanding by offering clarification and explanations
- Encourage the child to make comments regarding the contents
- Advise the child on how they can add any comments/information to the file
- Arrange for photocopying of any parts of the file a child may request and for the safekeeping of those photocopies for them

The Link-worker or member of staff should record on the file the date it was seen and any additional comments on the process.

Disputes

Any errors of information will be corrected subject to the agreement of the Registered Manager and child.

Where there is disagreement regarding the accuracy of a record the child has the right to have his/her account added to the record and the fact of the disagreement recorded.