



Services for Children, Families and Wellbeing

CHILDREN IN CARE **Children's Homes**

Admissions

Reviewed June 2017

Author: Sally Rimmer

Date to be Reviewed: June 2019

Admissions

Introduction

Residential care for children is a part of the overall network of services for children.

Section 20 Children Act 1989 places a duty on a Local Authority to provide accommodation for a child 'who appears to them to require accommodation' as a result of:

- (a) there being no person who has parental responsibility for him/her
- (b) his being lost or having been abandoned
- (c) the person who has been caring for him/her being prevented from doing so (whether or not permanently, and for whatever reason) from providing them with suitable accommodation or care.

The Local Authority also has a duty to provide accommodation to children and young people who are the subject of a Care Order or Emergency Protection Order.

The admission of a child into care can be a traumatic life event for both the child and their family. It is crucial that the staff involved in placing children in care consider the impact of the process on the child. The effect and a child's response to being placed at the home can be dependent on how this process is managed. If the admission is rushed or ad hoc with little or no preparation, the child may respond in a distressed and resistant manner. This may negatively impact on the future stability of the placement and deter the child from building trusting relationships with the carers. It is therefore important that social workers and residential staff dedicate time to plan admissions, involve the child and their family and offer an empathetic and caring manner.

This procedure is to be followed in conjunction with Children in Care Procedures **5.1.6**

Placements in Residential Care

Planning

Effective care planning and strong working relationships between the staff of the home and the child's social worker are essential to the success of a child's placement.

The registered person will ensure that they and staff engage proactively with the social worker to shape and contribute fully to the various plans for the child's care on an on-going basis.

The Care Plan will need to demonstrate the aims of the placement and how the home will be able to meet these needs. The registered manager will only accept placements for children where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs.

The registered person will refuse to accept a placement of a child in the absence of a comprehensive and up to date plan.

Admissions

Planned Placements

Where a decision has been made that a child requires a residential placement, and after approval by the Head of Service, the child's social worker should contact the Registered Manager of the children's home to discuss the potential planned placement.

In making this request, the social worker will be asked to provide information about the child; the type of placement needed, the Care Plan the date by which the placement is required, the likely length of time for which the placement is required, any behavioural concerns, the child's placement and family history and the expected level of contact between the child and parents.

The social worker should also outline any risks associated with the placement. It is essential that homes understand what will be required of them before they accept responsibility for a child's placement, to avoid disruption and instability for the child in future and for other children in the home.

Requests to Registered Managers

The Registered Manager should take account of the Children's Homes Regulations 2015 when accepting a child for admission.

The Registered Manager or Senior Assistant in their absence must undertake an Impact Risk Assessment to assess any impact on the children and young people currently living at the home and what measures will be put in place to manage any identified impact.

If the Impact Risk Assessment determines the impact cannot be addressed, the Registered Manager must inform the Head of Service for Children in Care and the Placements Manager, providing a copy of the Impact Risk Assessment.

The Registered Manager will challenge (under regulation 5(c)) any social worker, Team Manager or Head of Service who asks them to accept a child in the absence of a complete and current relevant plan, as the expectation that a placement of a child without the necessary information would go ahead (in circumstances other than an emergency) is inadequate.

Where the impact is assessed as negligible the placement can be agreed and the admission process can be planned.

Placement Planning

Before the child is placed, the child's social worker will liaise with the relevant Registered Manager to provide details of the child's immediate child care needs and to arrange a Placement Planning Meeting.

Participants will include:

- The social worker
- The parent;

Admissions

- The child (if appropriate);
- The key residential staff;
- Any other relevant professionals, e.g. a representative from the child's school;
- Anyone else considered appropriate or who will have a role in the placement.

The purpose of the Placement Planning Meeting is to finalise the Placement Plan as recorded in the Placement Information Record, and the details of the child's needs in the placement including the daily routine, and discuss the Care Plan. This will involve a discussion of the child's needs, including their personal history, religious identity, cultural and linguistic background and racial origin, their health and education needs and how these are to be met. It will also include the arrangements for registering the child with local health professionals (GP, dentist and optician).

The Placement Plan should cover the following issues;

- The type of accommodation to be provided and the address;
- Where the authority has, or is notified of, child protection concerns relating to the child, or the child has gone missing from the placement or from any previous placement, the day to day arrangements put in place by the appropriate person (placement provider) to keep the child safe;
- The child's personal history, religious identity, cultural and linguistic background and racial origin;
- Where the child is a Looked After Child, the respective responsibilities of the Local Authority and parents/anyone with parental responsibility; any delegation of responsibility by parents/anyone with Parental Responsibility to the Local Authority for the child's day-to-day care; the expected duration of the arrangements and the steps to bring the arrangements to an end, including arrangements for the child to return to live with parents/anyone with Parental Responsibility; where the child is aged 16 or over and agrees to being provided with accommodation under Section 20 Children Act 1989, that fact.
- The circumstances in which it is necessary to obtain in advance the approval for the child to take part in school trips or overnight stays;
- Arrangements for the financial support of the child during the placement.

The meeting also provides an opportunity to ensure that the registered manager has a copy of any relevant court order and that full information is shared about any behaviour management issues.

Wherever possible, the Placement Planning Meeting should be used to plan any introductions to the placement, for example whether arrangements should be made for the child, parents and the social worker to visit the home and/or whether it may be appropriate to have an introductory overnight stay. If this is not possible, arrangements may be made for residential staff to visit the child and parents; or for information about the home to be

Admissions

sent to the child and/or the parents. For example about routines in the home, bedtimes, meals, visitors, pocket money, school, privacy and the overall expectations in relation to the child's behaviour within the home.

If it is not possible to hold a Placement Planning Meeting before the placement, because of the urgency of the placement, it must take place within 72 hours of the placement.

The child's social worker will complete and arrange for the circulation of the Care Plan and Placement Plan/Placement Information Record to the child, parents and residential staff before or within 72 hours of the placement.

At the time of the placement, the residential staff must also be given any additional information about details of the child's day to day needs which may not be covered by the Placement Information Record but are important to ensure that the home is in the best possible position to help the child settle in the new placement. For example any particular fears at night-time or other emotional needs.

The child's social worker must provide the child with written information about the looked after service, including information on using the authority's complaints procedure.

The social worker should ensure that any children's guide and other information about the home that is available for the child is also obtained and given to him/her.

In all cases, the child should be accompanied to the home by the social worker and helped to settle in. Suitable luggage should be used and a child's belongings should never be transported in bin-bags.

Admission Process

The social worker must pass all information (please refer to LAC procedures for time scales) and other arrangements to the Registered Manager of the home or their Senior Assistant, this must include: -

- Accurate details of the reason for the referral to residential services and what are seen as the aims of the placement.
- Information regarding the child's previous history.
- Clear understanding of future plans for the child.
- Placement Information Record, Care Plan if available
- Risk assessment of any known risks
- Information regarding any involvement with other agencies; is the child open to Outreach, YOS or Health professionals.

A pre-placement meeting must be held to discuss and agree roles and responsibilities, which agencies are completing which tasks so all parties are clear on how the child's needs are to be met and who has responsibility for different tasks. The children's home on its own will not be able to meet all of the child's needs and all planning must identify other agencies involved or to become involved.

The Registered Manager of the home will inform the staff team of the planned admission and share the information with them. A link-worker will be allocated who should arrange with the social worker to meet the child's family to provide information regarding the home,

Admissions

a copy of the Statement of Purpose, welcome pack and general information about the day to day activity of the home.

The Registered Manager will advise and prepare the other children for the introduction of the new resident and where possible identify a child who could assist and support the child to settle in.

The child should always be informed of the plan and prepared for the admission, where possible this should include visits to the home to allow the child, their family and staff to become familiar with each other and begin to form working relationships.

A date for admission must be agreed by the Registered Manager, Placements Manager and Area Team Manager.

The date of the Placement Agreement (72 hour Planning meeting) must be agreed by the Registered Manager and social worker.

Notification of Placement

The child's social worker will update the child's electronic record with the details of the placement.

Notification of the placement will also be sent by the child's social worker to the Designated Nurse for LAC, the relevant person in the education service, and the child's GP.

The child's social worker will notify all family members consulted and involved in the decision-making process of the placement.

The child's social worker must also notify the allocated Independent Reviewing Officer or, if it is the first placement, the Independent Review Team of the placement. This notification will trigger the appointment of an Independent Reviewing Officer, if it is the first placement, and the setting up of arrangements for a Looked After review.

These notifications must be made in writing, advising of the placement decision and the name and address of the children's home where the child is to be placed.

The notifications should be before the start of the placement or within 5 working days.

The child's social worker should also notify - preferably in writing but it may be verbally - all those involved in the day to day arrangements for the child, including school and any health professional or YOT worker actively involved with the child.

It will be necessary for the home or the child's social worker to ensure the child is registered with a GP, Dentist and Optician, either retaining practices known to him or her (which is preferable) or in the area where they are placed.

In relation to a first Looked After placement it will also be necessary for the social worker to liaise with the Designated Nurse for Children in Care to arrange a Health Care Assessment. The social worker must arrange for the completion of a Personal Education Plan.

For any new placement, every effort should be made to enable the child to remain at the same school unless there are reasons which would be detrimental to his or her well-being.

Admissions

Admission and Pre-admission visits

- Staff availability is vital. The Registered Manager will ensure that a member of staff is nominated to introduce the child to the home, staff and children. A sensitive, caring approach at these times is crucial to the development of good relationships.
- Admission to a home can be a very anxious time for a child and their family. Make them feel welcome, offer refreshments. When admitting, make sure the bedroom is warm, clean and tidy.
- Efforts should be made to ensure that privacy for a child and their family is upheld.
- The child should have some understanding, appropriate to their age and level of development, of the aims of the placement and the future plans for them. Every effort should be made to communicate with the child to assess their wishes and feelings about the placement, their future and any other significant matters.
- Information will need to be given, including 'house rules', health and safety procedures, staff should not assume these are understood or remembered. It will need to be repeated later. Give information in manageable amounts.
- Staff should try to find out what the child's interests are, what they like to do and enjoy. Leisure activities offer positive experience to children.
- Personal belongings are important, any items of value must be recorded and security of valuables discussed. Young people and children should be encouraged to bring favourite and cherished possessions with them.
- A full fire drill demonstration and evacuation should occur prior to bedtime on the first day of admission.
- On admission a detailed plan of day to day arrangements for the child will be put into place as agreed at the pre admission meeting.
- The child will be informed of any medical health checks needed and an explanation of what is involved to reassure them.
- The child must be welcomed into a home which is prepared; their room must be clean and tidy and have toiletries, towels and a welcome box. The menu should include food choices they have made and there should be activities planned that they are looking forward to taking part in.

Practice Checklist

Prior to Admission

- Have all relevant people been informed about the (potential) admission? (e.g. school)
- Do relevant home staff have all the information they require to support the child and their family effectively during admission and residence?

Admissions

- Have existing residents been prepared for the new admission as far in advance as possible? (e.g. group meetings)
- Pre-admission visits – ensure the child and, if appropriate, their family are invited to at least one pre-admission visit.
- Have identified risks been assessed and a written risk assessment completed stating what control measures staff at the home or other services will undertake to reduce risk.

Emergency Admissions

During office hours, a decision about the need for emergency accommodation should be taken by the Social Worker and the Team Manager. When an emergency placement in a residential children's home is indicated a decision should be made by a Head of Service or Service Manager in consultation with the Placements Manager and Registered Manager.

If **Out of Hours** all admissions must go through EDT (Emergency Duty Team). EDT are to contact the On Call Manager prior to any admission.

Only the named home on the EDT list can accept an emergency admission. The Registered Manager must be informed as soon as possible of an emergency admission.

The Registered Manager or senior assistant in their absence must undertake an Impact Risk Assessment to assess any impact on the children and young people currently living at the home and what measures will be put in place to manage any identified impact. If there is no Registered Manager or senior assistant on duty at the time, for example during the night the staff on duty are to undertake the Impact Risk Assessment

If the Impact Risk Assessment determines the impact cannot be addressed or managed the placement cannot be made.

EDT social workers must accompany all admissions to a children's home with all relevant signed documents including the Placement Information Record and risk assessment. Only in the most exceptional circumstances will the home allow a child to be admitted without these documents.

Parents / carers and the social worker are to be informed by the following working day.

In all cases the social worker is to arrange to visit the child the next working day.

The social worker and Registered Manager must agree the date for the 72hr Planning Meeting.

Admission Tasks

All relevant documentation and information forwarded to the home prior to admission should be checked. An individual file must be opened to contain this and any other

Admissions

information. If the child has moved from another placement then the risk assessment forms should also be forwarded

Young people and their families should receive a copy of the homes Statement of Purpose, the Complaints and Compliments Guides and the homes Welcome pack.

Staff must enter the child into the Admission Book; remembering to record the child's legal status.

Show the young person and their family around the home pointing out key rooms and ensure the young person is made aware of the Fire Exit routes

Personal belongings are important, any items of value must be recorded and security of valuables discussed.

Ensure any medication is accurately recorded and stored correctly. (Also see Medication Policy).

Check the diary for the date of 72hr Planning Meeting; ensure parents are aware of this.

Make arrangements for the social worker or family to bring any forgotten items that the young person requests.

Support and Monitoring of Placements

The child's social worker must visit the child in the placement within one week of the placement.

Where there are concerns in relation to the progress of the placement, consideration should be given to seeking additional resources to assist the placement.

Where there are any changes to the child's placement and/or legal status during the placement the homes staff will request the child's social worker to update the child's electronic records.

The Registered Manager of the home will request a Care Planning meeting to consider a review of the child's Care Plan where:

- The child is, or has been, persistently absent from the placement;
- The home, parents or Local Authority are concerned that the child is at risk of harm; or
- The child so requests, unless the Independent Reviewing Officer considers that the review is not justified.