



TRAFFORD
COUNCIL

Services for Children, Young People and Families

Children in care

Children's homes

Overnight visits to friends

Reviewed April 2020

Author: Sally Rimmer

Date to be Reviewed: January 2022

Introduction

Children living in children's homes should be able to enjoy staying with friends as long as the balance between their liberty and safety is maintained.

The opportunity to socialise away from the home is an important outlet for looked after children to experience.

Children must be made aware upon admission to the home that notice of requests to stay overnight is required and to ask on the day would make it difficult to arrange.

Contact with friends is usually positive and should be encouraged, providing the following procedures are followed.

Practice

Children living in the home need to be made aware that if they request to stay overnight at a friend's home, such a visit will only be considered if the parent/carer of the friend confirms the invitation to the staff.

Residential staff must inform the child's social worker of any invitation as soon as possible.

For children on Care Orders staff are to refer to Placement Plan and Care Plan. Staff to read current Trafford Policy on tri.x.

For children who are accommodated living in children's homes, the decision as to whether or not a child can stay overnight at a friend's should rest with the residential staff (Local Authority Circular LAC 2004) Guidance on the Delegation of Decisions on Overnight Stays for Looked After Children. Overnight visits should be discussed at the 72 hour meeting to ensure that the child's parents are aware of the procedures.

The most senior member of residential staff on duty will make the decision. Parents should always be consulted and their views taken into account. All arrangements for such decisions must be written into the Placement Plan and Care Plan of the child.

The Checklist, see attached, should be completed by the residential staff and any concerns raised with their manager prior to the visit taking place.

A child may feel stigmatised by the need for the residential staff to contact or visit the family of their friend; residential staff should explain to the child that on their parent's behalf their safety must be ensured.

The residential worker will contact the family to introduce themselves in person and ensure proper arrangements will be made for the supervision of the child's visit.

The residential worker should check that satisfactory sleeping arrangements exist.

The residential worker should check that the family knows what to do if the child went missing or became ill, the telephone number of the home, and any other appropriate contact numbers, should be given.

If a child is on any medication or they have any health concerns this must be passed on.

The residential staff should conduct themselves in a way that protects the child's privacy and only essential information about the child should be offered.

Statutory references are not required unless there are specific reasons to seek them. (Refer to LAC (2004))

Consideration should be given to the child's level of maturity and ability to protect themselves.

For any further visits telephone confirmation will suffice, unless on any previous visit there were grounds for concern.

It is important that the residential worker gives priority to organising such visits and that the child should not have to wait days for a decision.

Recording

Residential staff should record on the child's file the name of the friend, the name of the family, the address and contact numbers.

All decisions and arrangements regarding overnight stays should be written into the Placement Plan. If regular stays have been agreed the frequency should also be written.

Following any overnight stay a summary note should be recorded on the child's observation sheet noting how the visit had reportedly gone.

Points to note

There are some children whose behaviour or limited ability to protect themselves places others and themselves at risk. Careful consideration will need to be given as to how any visits to friends overnight can be facilitated.

It is important to remember that the need to offer a high level of protection to looked after children should not result in an overprotective cautious response to what should be regarded as a normal and healthy part of experiencing friendships.

Overnight stay checklist

Name of Child:

Date of Planned Visit:

Are arrangements for such visits written into the child's Placement Plan or Care Plan	YES	NO
Are there any relevant restrictions contained for exceptional reasons in the child's Care Plan, residential care plan, risk assessments or Court Orders which restrict the child from having particular overnight stays?	YES	NO
Are there any factors in the child's past experiences or behaviour, which would preclude overnight stays?	YES	NO
Is the child staying in the household with another child or children, rather than staying solely with an adult or adults?	YES	NO
Are there any grounds for concern that the child may be at significant risk in the household concerned or from the activities proposed?	YES	NO

What is known about the purpose of the overnight stay
What is the planned length of the stay

Do suitable sleeping arrangements exist	YES	NO
---	-----	----

What arrangements have been confirmed with the family making the invite, and who confirmed these?

Has the child's social worker been ,made aware of the invite and the name and address of the household passed onto the social worker	YES	NO
--	-----	----

Name and address of the friend and family

Has all the following information been passed on:		
Phone number of the children's home	YES	NO
Details of any medication	YES	NO
What to do if the child goes missing during the stay	YES	NO
What to do if the child became ill	YES	NO

Name of person completing form.....

Signature.....Date.....

Name of Manager.....

Signature.....Date.....