

How to Guide: Placement with Parents

This procedure applies to any placement of a child, on a Care Order or an Interim Care Order, with a parent or person with Parental Responsibility or person who held a Residence Order immediately before the Care Order was made, for more than 24 hours, including a placement for residential assessment:

- The social worker should ensure that appropriate authorization by the nominated officer for the placement is obtained prior to any move of the child. This applies even if the recommendation has been made in the course of a LAC Review. Such agreement can be given exceptionally without the usual consultation and checks only if there are exceptional circumstances which justify an immediate placement; provided:
 - There has been an interview with the proposed carer who agrees to the placement and provides as much of the assessment information as can be readily ascertained at the interview;
 - The accommodation has been inspected; and
 - Information has been obtained about and the social worker seeks to meet the other people in the household. (This is particularly relevant to identifying issues such as domestic violence and substance misuse which may impact on the child's safety.);
 - The assessment and the review of the child's case are completed within 10 working days of the child being placed;
 - The decision on placement is made and approved within 10 working days of the assessment being completed; and
 - If the decision is to confirm the placement, the Placement Plan is reviewed (and if appropriate amended);

- If the decision is not confirm the placement, the placement is terminated.

The reasons for a decision to place a child on this basis must be fully recorded, signed by the Nominated Officer and placed on the child's case record.

If the child is placed in these circumstances, social work visits must take place at least once a week until the first Looked After Review, and thereafter at intervals of not more than 6 weeks.

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

The social worker should make the following notifications in writing before the placement where possible and otherwise within 5 working days:

- The Designated Nurse for LAC;
- The relevant person in the education service;
- The local Children's Services (if the placement is in the area of a different local authority);
- The child's GP;
- All family members consulted and involved in the decision-making process of the placement;
- 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.

The child's social worker must also notify the allocated Independent Reviewing Officer:

- Other than those exceptional circumstances where authorization was given by the Nominated Officer without the usual consultation and checks the social worker must complete the following tasks:
 - Consult formally and in writing (including to the parents and child, if appropriate), requesting their replies back in writing with:
 - The child;
 - Both parents (including a parent who is not the proposed carer of the child);

- Any person with Parental Responsibility;
 - Any other member of the family who is significant to the child;
 - Relevant health practitioners including any health visitor known to the child, the child's GP, as well as the GP and any health visitor known to the person with whom it is proposed the child will be placed (with the person's consent);
 - The child's school and the local education service where the child will live;
 - The child's current foster carer and supervising social worker or the manager of the children's home currently caring for the child;
 - The Probation Service if it has contact with the family;
 - The Police;
 - The Youth Offending Service;
 - The relevant Children's Services Department if the child is placed in another local authority's area;
 - The child's Independent Reviewing Officer.
- Written replies must be placed on the child's case record and considered in reaching a recommendation to the Nominated Officer;
 - NB the minutes of a Child Protection Review Conference can be taken as a written record of consultation with those present;
 - Undertake the following checks to assess the suitability of the proposed placement:
 - Check the proposed carer and all members of the household aged 16 plus with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) the carers' GP, NSPCC and Children's Services Records;
 - Inspect the accommodation;
 - Obtain relevant information about the proposed main carer(s) and all members of the household.

- Make an assessment of the suitability of the carer and other adult members of the household to care for children, and in particular, in relation to the child:
 - To provide for the child's physical needs and appropriate medical and dental care;
 - To protect the child adequately from harm or danger, including any person who presents a risk of harm to the child;
 - To ensure that the home environment is safe for the child;
 - To ensure that the child's emotional needs are met and he / she is provided with a positive sense of self, including any particular needs arising from religious persuasion, racial origin, and cultural and linguistic background, and any disability the child has;
 - To promote the child's learning and intellectual development through encouragement, cognitive stimulation and the promotion of educational success and social opportunities;
 - To enable the child to regulate his / her emotions and behaviour, including by modelling appropriate behaviour and interactions with others;
 - To provide a stable family environment to enable the child to develop and maintain secure attachments to the parents and other persons who provide care for the child.
- The parents' state of health (physical, emotional and mental), the parents' medical history, including current or past issues of domestic violence, substance misuse or mental health problems;
- The state of health (physical, emotional and mental) of other adult members of the household and their medical history, including current or past issues of domestic violence, substance misuse or mental health problems;
- The parents' family relationships and the composition of the parents' household, including:

- The identity of all other members of the household, their age and the nature of their relationship with parents and one another, including any sexual relationship;
 - Their relationship with any parent of the child.
 - Other adults who are not members of the household but are likely to have regular contact with the child;
 - Current / previous domestic violence between household members including the parents;
 - The parents' family history, including:
 - The particulars of the parent's childhood and upbringing, including the strengths and difficulties of their parents / carers;
 - The parent's relationship with their parents and siblings, and their relationships with each other;
 - The parents' educational achievement, including any specific learning difficulty / disability;
 - A chronology of significant life events.
 - Other relatives and their relationships with the child and parents;
 - Criminal offences of which the parents or other members of the household have been convicted or cautioned;
 - Parents' past and present employment / sources of income;
 - The nature of the neighbourhood and resources available in the community to support the child and parents;
 - Any available information about the parents' previous experiences of looking after children. Where a parent has other children subject to care / adoption orders, earlier case records should be explored to ascertain the circumstances, which led to social work involvement, and any indication that the capacity of the parent to bring up children has changed.
- The social worker should then arrange for a summary of the information and views obtained to be considered by either a LAC Review (if the recommendation did not arise there) or a Child Protection Review Conference (in the event that the child previously suffered significant harm and is still subject to a child protection plan, unless the

recommendation has arisen from such a review) and amend the Care Plan as appropriate;

- The social worker should then send to the Nominated Officer the recommendations of the LAC Review or Child Protection Review Conference together with the Care Plan, the proposed Placement Plan and a report covering the following:
 - A summary of child's and family's history;
 - A summary of how and why the child came to be in care;
 - A summary of plan for the child when he / she originally came into care;
 - Details of proposed placement with the parent/s;
 - The outcome of the assessments, consultations and enquiries made, including an assessment of the parents' ability to meet the identified needs of the child;
 - The aims and objectives of the proposed placement (there needs to be great clarity about why this placement is being proposed) and long term plan for the child;
 - Any identified areas of risk involved in the placement;
 - The support and services to be provided to the family and child;
 - Details of supervision of placement;
 - Arrangements for the child's education;
 - Contingency plans in case of breakdown.
- As well as the usual contents, the proposed Placement Plan must include the following:
 - Details of the support and services to be provided to the parents during the placement;
 - The obligation on the parents to notify the Local Authority of any relevant change in circumstances including any intention to change address, any changes in the household in which the child lives and any serious incident involving the child;
 - The obligation on the parents to ensure that any information relating to the child or the child's family or any other person given in confidence to the parents in connection with the placement is kept confidential and that such information is not disclosed to any person without the consent of the Local Authority;

- The circumstances in which it is necessary to obtain the prior approval of the Local Authority for the child to live in a household other than that of the parents;
 - The circumstances in which the placement of the child with the parents pending completion of the assessment of suitability will be terminated if the decision following completion of the assessment is not to confirm the placement.
- Following written agreement from the Nominated Officer the social worker can proceed with arrangements for the placement;
- The social worker should subsequently give due consideration around the issue of seeking to discharge the Care Order and ensure this is thoroughly discussed within the LAC Review;
- Social workers should note that in the event that the relevant plan for Placement with Parents provides for a series of short term placements the requirements as to consultation, checks and references are only required once, provided that all placements take place within a 12 month period, no single placement is longer than 4 weeks, and the total duration does not exceed 90 days;
- Social workers must visit the child in placement within 1 week of the placement and thereafter every six weeks;
- Where possible endings should take place in a planned way through LAC Review leading to Revocation in Court (see separate procedures) but in emergencies social workers must seek advice from a manager who will make the decision around ending a placement after seeking legal advice;
- The social worker must notify in writing all those informed when the placement started that it has ended, whether this is by discharge of the Order or by termination as a result of a difficulty;
- The Childs Case Record and database must be kept fully up to date throughout the process.