

# Section 4 – Children & Young People

## 4.1 Reasons we become involved with families

The Directorate of Social Services receives referrals regarding children and young people from a range of sources, including health visitors, GPs, schools, councillors, children, young people and families themselves, the police and neighbours. The needs of children, young people and their families can be complex and requires the Directorate to work with other professionals to share expertise and provide services.

There are many reasons why people contact Social Services. For example:

*To ask for help to meet the needs of a child or young person who has a disability or special needs.*

*Because a child or young person has been hurt by someone/or received an injury.*

*Because a child or young person is not being looked after properly.*

*To ask for help with managing children's behaviour.*

- **What happens when the Directorate receives a referral?**

The Contact and Referral Team receive all referrals. If deemed appropriate referrals may be passed to an assessment team before being passed to one of the children's services teams. The assessment is completed with the family and other relevant professionals who may have knowledge of the family for example, doctors, teachers and the police. The assessment includes the views of children and young people.

Referrals or requests for services to support children and young people and families are assessed within seven working days.

When the assessment has been completed there are ranges of potential outcomes, which may include: -

- Child and Family Support
- Redirection to Other Agencies
- Child Protection Issues
- Child or Young Person needs to become Looked After

## 4.2 When a child needs to be looked after

The Authority is required by legislation to promote the upbringing of children and young people within their own families. However for some children and young people this is not possible and therefore for those children and young people who are unable to remain at home or with extended family/friends they will need to be looked after by foster carers.

Sometimes parents agree for the local authority to place their son or daughter with foster carers, this is called a 'voluntary agreement'. In these circumstances the parents (or other person with parental responsibility) would be able to take their child or young person home at any time as they retain their parental responsibilities. However if the Local Authority considers it is not in the best interests of the child or young person they may apply to the Courts for an Order.

When the local authority applies to the Court for an Order 'Interim or Full Care Order' the parents share parental responsibility with the authority however, the local authority is able to make decisions if it is in the best interests of the child or young person and will make the decision about who the child or young person should live with.

- Requesting a placement for children and young people

Social workers from assessment teams and area locality teams must request any placements to the placement unit. The request will be considered at placement panel that meets on a weekly basis. The panel will consider what resources can support the placement where they are currently living to enable wherever possible placements to be maintained to ensure less disruption to children.

If the panel agrees that the young person should become looked after or move from their current placement this will be undertaken in a planned way.

When potential foster carers have been identified (matched) they will be contacted by the family placement duty officer or by their own allocated worker. Information is shared regarding the child or young person's needs, if the placement is being considered at this stage the child or young person's allocated worker will provide additional information and further discussions take place.

Arrangements are made with the foster carers for the allocated worker for the child or young person to visit the prospective placement. If all goes well a date will be arranged for the child or young person to be placed and meetings held, this would include introductory visits.

**Unplanned/Emergency Placements:** Placements made in this way are not ideal; unfortunately they cannot always be avoided. The identification (matching) of a placement is made in the same way as it is for planned placements; however, it is unlikely that there will be time for introductory visits. Placements made with foster

carers in this way may only be for a day or two until longer-term arrangements are made but in some circumstances they may be for longer.

- **Pre- placement Meeting:** It is preferable that the meeting is held prior to the child or young person becoming looked after, this provides an opportunity to arrange introductory visits and to ensure the child or young person's needs are considered.

In respect of unplanned placements, a planning meeting should be held within 72 hours of the child being placed.

This meeting will also look at arrangements for school, contact and look at identified needs and how those needs can be met and how positive outcomes can be achieved.

### Contact Issues

Whatever the arrangements for contact, discussions must take place with the child or young persons allocated worker with you and your allocated workers prior to arrangements being made, this is discussed at the pre-placement planning meeting.

- You may be asked to allow parents, siblings to have contact in your home.
- You may be asked to provide transport to children and young people to enable them to have contact with parents, siblings etc. at a contact venue (Family Centre).
- You may be asked to supervise contact at your own home or at a contact venue (Family Centre).
- The contact arrangements will detail the people who should not have contact with the child or young person or who should have restricted contact.
- You are provided with information about people who are not allowed contact with the child/young person including what you should do if there is contact.

Unless there are exceptional circumstances, the Authority will promote contact between children and young people with their parents.

The Authority has a responsibility to carry out a risk assessment prior to making contact arrangements for the child or young person with their family/ friends.

## 4.3 Placement of a Child/Young Person

When the placement is made, the child or young person's allocated worker must provide you with the looked after children's documentation which includes the 'Foster Placement Agreement' (Placement Information Record and Referral Information Record). You are required to sign a Foster Placement Agreement for each child or young person placed with you, which states that you agree to look after the child or young person. The agreement clarifies the arrangements for the child or young person.

If the placement is unplanned the allocated worker for the child or young person may not have completed all the documentation, however, as a minimum you should receive the 'Foster Placement Agreement' and a 'Care Plan' within 5 working days of placement.

All children and young people 'looked after' have a Care Plan. The care plan outlines the reason why the child or young person is looked after and sets out how their individual needs will be met by the Authority and partner agencies (Health and Education). The Care Plan is reviewed regularly at a 'Children's Looked After Review Meeting' to ensure that the needs of the child or young person are being met and that the Authority is fulfilling its statutory responsibilities

- Information provided to you the carer on placement

- Referral and Information Record
- Placement Information Record
- Medical Consent
- Delegated Authority Form
- Care Plan

- Information provided to a child or young person placed

Every child or young person who becomes Looked After should receive the following:-

- LAC Review Information
- Holdall
- Complaint leaflet
- Preparation for Independence Checklist

If a child or young person is aged 7-17 years they will also receive an 'information pack' from their social worker. The pack is a basic guide and informs the child or young person about their rights when they are looked after when he or she is living away from their parent/s and where they can seek independent help if they feel they are not being looked after properly or no one is listening to their wishes and feelings.

If the foster child or young person has not received the information pack, foster carers should ask for one for the child or young person from their allocated worker or alternatively you could request one from your worker on their behalf.

- Children and young people aged between 7-17 years will also receive a 'Children's Guide' from the Fostering Team on behalf of the 'Children Rights Officer' ensuring that they have received their information pack.

The 'Preparation for Independence Checklist' is a booklet that is provided to a child or young person between 4-16 years who becomes looked after. This booklet will be given to the child or young person at their first 'LAC Review'. It is hoped that this list will act as a flexible tool to help children and young people to develop their independent skills prior to moving on from foster care.

This checklist is divided into tasks appropriate to different age groups. The skills identified as appropriate for children 4-7 years should be built upon as the child matures. However children and young people learn at different paces and have various levels of understanding and therefore the list should be used in a way that is appropriate to the individual child or young person's circumstances.

- Support and Statutory visits to the child or young person in placement

When a child or young person becomes looked after, the child or young person's allocated worker must adhere to certain statutory requirements. Visits, to the child or young person must take place as follows:

Within one week of the commencement of the placement.

At least six weekly in the first year of placement (more often if required).

Three monthly thereafter (more often if required).

The purpose of the visit is to:

Observe the child or young person with you and your family.

See the child or young person alone or to take them out (depending on age).

See the bedroom and other areas of the house to ensure that the child or young person's needs are being met.

The child or young person's allocated worker may visit more frequently to provide support if this is required.

- What is a Looked After Children's Review Meeting?

It is a statutory requirement that the arrangements for every child or young person looked after are reviewed in accordance with Children Act Regulations.

Looked After Children's Review Meetings are held at the following intervals:

- Within 4 weeks of the date the placement beginning was made.
- Within 3 months from the date the placement began).
- Six monthly thereafter.

An earlier review meeting may be arranged if changes are required to the Care Plan. A Care Plan can only be changed at a Look After Children's Review Meeting.

An '[Independent Reviewing Officer](#)' who has no involvement in the management of the case chairs the meeting and is responsible for ensuring that all the decisions made are in the best interests of the child or young person.

**Who attends: -**

- Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO).
- Child or young person's parents/other.
- Child or young person placed (depending on age/understanding).
- Foster carers.
- The child or young person's allocated worker.
- The allocated family placement worker.
- The professionals significant in the child or young person's.

A written record of the review meeting is completed by the IRO and is circulated to those who attended the meeting.

Your input is essential to these meetings, you are expected to contribute to the review discussions and complete a consultation form prior to the review.

## 4.4 Meeting Educational Needs

Education matters to all children and young people it is their entitlement. School is an important part of everyday life for all children and young people, they can develop self-confidence and skills, receive praise and encouragement, learn about and build relationships and achieve their full potential. Valuing and supporting the education of looked after children and all must see young people as a priority.

Every child or young person who becomes looked after and is of school age 4–16 years must have a ‘**Personal Education Plan**’ within 20 school days of becoming looked after. *(see appendix ??)*

The PEP is an integral part of the Care Plan it sets objectives and targets for educational achievements and behaviour in school. You will be involved in drawing up the PEP in conjunction with the ‘**Designated Teacher**’ at the school and the allocated worker you have an important role to play in monitoring and supporting the child or young person to achieve the targets.

The targets will be reviewed at the child or young person’s Looked After Children’s Review meeting.

Sometimes the child or young person’s allocated social worker may feel it would be in the child or young person’s interests to change school to enable them to attend a school in the area in which you live. If this is the case, they will need to discuss with you worker arrangements for registering a child or young person at a new school.

You must ensure that the child or young person attends school regularly, inform the school if the child or young person is going to be absent or is going on holiday. You can also consider the following:

- Ask the child/young person’s teacher for advice.
- Request a copy of the timetable (so you can help with lesson planning).
- Ensure that the child or young person has the correct equipment for school, for example: books, pens, stationary, PE kit, cookery equipment.
- Encourage the child/ young person to do their homework.
- Provide a suitable environment to complete the homework.
- Be aware of the demands of coursework and when public examinations are to take place (SATs and GCSE’s take place in May, some schools have exams twice a year).
- Encourage the child or young person to take part in after school activities and clubs wherever possible.
- Attend parent evenings and school events.

## 4.5 Meeting Health Needs

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- When do children and young people have a health assessment?

It is a legal requirement that 'looked after' children and young people are required to have a health assessment. Within 14 days of the child or young person being placed with you, an appointment for the health assessment should be arranged. A 'Clinical Nurse Specialist' will arrange an appointment with to see the child/young person within your home if possible.

When a child or young person is fostered the authority may have little information on their health needs. The following may apply:

- Immunisations not complete.
- Missed medicals.
- Missed hospital appointments.
- Missed development checks.
- Poorly managed asthma, eczema, and diet.
- Missed talks (advice) about growing up by school nurse, hygiene, personal care, and sexual health/education.

Research has shown that children and young people who are looked after may have more health related problems compared to other children and young people. While living with you there is an opportunity to make a difference to their health and well being by being proactive and by accessing health care.

- Health Assessments/appointments

The health assessment is not a medical examination. Children, young people and you will have the opportunity to discuss the health concerns with the nurses.

Health promotion e.g. [smoking](#), [healthy eating](#), [safety](#), [safe sex](#) (depending on child or young person's age) is also discussed.

We encourage all children and young people to have 6 monthly dental checks, annual eye tests (optician) and to register with a local GP.

The Nurse Specialists will also talk about other things in the child or young person's life that may influence their health e.g. Hobbies, Friendships, Education, Involvement with the police.

Older children and young people have the opportunity to be seen on their own for part of the assessment. If you would like to discuss concerns about the child or



young person without the child or young person being present, this can be arranged with the nurse.

- **How often are health assessments carried out**

Children under 5 years have 6 monthly health assessments except in the first year of placement when they are seen within 14 days, again in 3 months and then 6 monthly.

Children over 5 years have annual health assessments except in the first year of placement when they are seen within 14 days again in 9 months and then annually.

If you have not had the appointment letter within this time please ring: Trethomas Health Centre and request Appointment Co-ordinator or Nurse Specialist. If you are unable to attend an appointment for any reason you must ring the Appointment Co-Coordinator.

A child or young person's health is important and must be a priority. Sometimes the child/young person will need to be taken out of school/college to have the assessment.

- **What is the Parent Child Health Record (Red book)**

The Parent Child Health Record or 'Red Book' records health information for all children from birth through to their teenage years. Information included in the Red Book includes family and personal health history (where available), details of immunisation and vaccinations, developmental observation including height and weight details and the health care plan.

The child or young person's allocated worker should give you the Red Book when the child or young person is placed with you. Sometimes, it is not available at this time; therefore the nurse specialists will create a new Red Book using information from the child or young person's medical notes.

When a child or young person leaves your home, you should return the Red Book to their allocated worker so it can accompany the child or young person to their next placement if this is the plan.

## 4.6 Delegated Authority – issues of consent

When it has been agreed that a child/ young person needs to be looked after either by means of a court order or on a voluntary basis with consent of parents, the social worker will speak to those with parental responsibility to determine if they are willing to delegate consent for specific activities to the foster carers. You should receive the Permission to Delegate Consent to Foster Carer Proforma. This means you the foster carer will be able to give permission for the child to partake in certain activities as specified in the list below.

This should be either at the point a child is placed with foster carers or at the planning meeting, which should be held within 5 working days.

- ‘Overnight stays’ (up to 3 consecutive nights) *see appendix*
- Organised Activities
- School day trips
- Longer school trips in UK
- Longer trips abroad with school
- Using computers in school
- Change of school
- School photographs
- School Doctor
- Permission for school to give Paracetamol, etc
- Meeting with school staff
- Medical consents (as discussed)
- Optician appointments/tests/glasses
- Sports or social clubs/organisations
- Joining religious organisations
- Participating in hazardous activities, e.g. rock climbing, skiing
- Haircuts
- Body piercing
- Photographs for publicity

In some situations, foster carers will not hold delegated authority and the local authority should determine whether a specific activity should take place.

In situations where the local authority shares ‘parental responsibility’, the social worker on behalf of the local authority can specify the activities where delegated authority can be held by the foster carer.

The social worker must sign the proforma along with you the carer once delegated authority has been determined. As soon as all relevant parties have indicated the arrangements for delegated authority on the proforma, a copy will be provided to you the carer, the School, GP, Parent and child/ young person if they are of

appropriate age and understanding. A copy will also be retained on the child's record.

The delegated authority proforma will be considered at each LAC review. The Independent Reviewing Officer will consider the areas where permission to delegate authority has been provided and will identify if further permissions need to be sought.

## 4.7 Preparation for Adult Life

Growing up doesn't happen overnight. For some young people it can be a relatively quick and smooth transition. For others, it can be more challenging and can take many years. For young people aged 16 and above, the process is not, and certainly shouldn't be, an abrupt event. Rather it is a process that should take into account the different aspects of the transition to adulthood.

A parent's support for their child doesn't follow formal structures. It reacts appropriately to a child's mental, physical and emotional development. The majority of parents support their child emotionally through any bad experiences. A practical skill like cleaning and budgeting won't be taught at a specific time but as a child develops. Support and advice on education and employment don't start when a child turns fifteen. Help with the first move away from the family home won't normally be a one-off event; the family home can remain a bolthole for many years afterwards. For a corporate parent, however, this support is provided by a myriad of different services, which tend to be formally structured and bureaucratic.

- **Role of Pathway Plans**

Pathway plans are the key legal document in which young people can set out their hopes, aspirations and goals for the future. Young people's needs and views should be at the centre of the plan, as well as how the local authority intends to support them. Plans should stretch at least as far as a young person's 21st birthday, and beyond for young people still in education or training. The local authority's role is to identify how best each young person can be supported to help them to attain their goals.

Pathway planning should build on the preparation and planning work undertaken during the period young people is being looked after (including care plans and personal education plans) rather than being started entirely from scratch. All care leavers should have a needs assessment and pathway plan. Including details of: personal support; accommodation needs; education, training and employment; family and social relationships (and how these can be supported); practical and other skills; health needs and financial support that can be given. Contingency planning is a key part of the pathway plan too and should ensure that changes in circumstances or potential crises are averted wherever possible, or at least dealt with in a planned way.

- **Foster Carers role**

You have a key role in supporting and preparing young people for the challenges of adult life. Evidence shows that young people in long-term foster placements, especially where those relationships are close, are more likely to have successful educational outcomes, where carers see promoting a young person's education as

an important part of their role, young people are also more likely to be successful in education and employment.

Ways in which you can have a particular impact on a young person's experience:

- Providing continuity and stability when many other changes are going on in young people's lives.
- Being committed to a young person as an individual, supporting them in their interests and fighting their corner.
- Giving young people a more 'normal' home environment, and dealing appropriately with things that may have made placements go wrong in the past and can often lead to the breakdown of placements.
- Foster carers can deal with behaviour that threatens the placement or will impact badly on their future life without rejecting the child (liking them as individuals).
- Focusing on education in a general sense, not just how young people do in exams but by paying attention to how they enjoy themselves at school and fit in and how young people are encouraged to use their education as they leave care.
- Providing support for young people to deal with issues around their birth families and acting as an intermediary.
- Providing young people with as much support and encouragement as and after they leave care as possible.
- Appropriate 'through care' provision for young people in foster care should take into account the needs and best interests of the young person concerned. Just as parents want the best for their child, you often provide commitment to the young people in their care well beyond normal expectations.

There is increasing acknowledgement of the role and difference that you can make to the life chances of young people as they move through and leave the care system.

- **Expectations of Foster Carers in respect of working with young people aged 16 and over**
- To use the preparation to independence checklist from as early an age as possible.
- To give the child/young person more responsibility as they mature - this includes caring for themselves, and managing their finances. For example pocket money, clothing and working towards managing a small budget to purchase their own foods etc
- To ensure the young person's wishes and feelings are communicated to the allocated 16 plus worker.
- The 16 plus team will ensure that foster carers are provided with all the necessary information to enable them to make a decision in relation to young

people remaining in their care post 18. This will enable foster carers to be open and honest in their discussions with young people and the allocated 16 plus worker in respect of the young person's continued placement under a different arrangement.

- **Fostering Conversions to Supported Lodgings**

For Foster Carers and young people who wish to continue living together when the young person reaches 18, this placement could convert to a supported lodgings arrangement if all parties are in agreement. There is an expectation that the young person will be engaged in education or training. The duration of this placement will be agreed as part of the pathway plan.

For the foster carer this would mean:

The 16 plus Accommodation Officer would undertake a short assessment in liaison with the allocated family placement team worker and foster carer.

The assessment focuses on the differences between the role of the foster carer and the changes needed to take a 'step back' from providing all aspects of care to supporting and assisting the young person to make their own choices.

The completed conversion assessment is presented to Foster Panel for discussion and approval.

- If approved, the 16 plus Accommodation Officer would take responsibility for providing support and supervision specifically to the supported lodgings provider(s) for the duration of the placement.
- The allocated 16 plus worker will work with the young person and the provider to review arrangements and to plan for the young person's move to supported accommodation, university halls or independent living.

## 4.8 Children's Rights/Advocacy/NYAS

- Children's Rights

Specific information on the rights for looked after children can be found on [www.rightsforme.co.uk](http://www.rightsforme.co.uk) – this is a good resource for children and foster carers, as it contains animated digital stories produced by looked after children.

The Local Authority has a Children's Rights Officer, some of the duties of this officer are to:-

- Ensure all professionals with whom they have contact listen to Looked After children or young people.
- Advocate on behalf of children and young people, through consultation and improved participation by children and young people in planning services and monitoring outcomes.

- Advocacy

NYAS advocacy services provide children and young people with information about their rights and entitlements and assistance to enable them to use formal complaints procedures if that is what they want, and to have a voice and be heard when decisions are made about their lives.

Referrals can be made by you the carer, the young person (age appropriate), or the child care social worker.

## 4.8 Bullying Procedure

Information in relation to the Anti Bullying policy and guidance on recognising and managing bullying is contained in **appendix ??**

## 4.9 Children Missing from Placement

Caerphilly Social Services and Gwent Police have developed an operational protocol, which aims to provide guidance to assist foster carers, police officers and allocated workers in dealing with situations where children and young people go missing.

A child or young person may be missing if they are not where they are supposed to be without permission and they fail to tell anyone where they are going or who they are with. You should take all reasonable and practical steps to try and find out where the child or young person is and/or why they are absent.

If the situation is not resolved and concerns continue contact:

- The child or young person's allocated worker,
- Your allocated worker or
- The Emergency Duty Team (outside office hours) to decide if the Police are to be informed.

You can contact the 'out of hours' support service on 01495 233251 for advice between the hours of 6pm to 10pm, outside of these hours you can contact the 'Emergency Duty Team' (EDT) by telephoning 08003284432. The team is available outside office hours.

Most children and young people are reported to the Police as missing within hours. All children and young people missing must be reported to the Police before 12 pm midnight on the first day of absence. In cases where children frequently go missing the allocated worker should identify risks within a risk assessment.

## 4.10 Role of the foster carer in moving children on for Adoption

Foster carers are an invaluable part of the moving on process and their input contributes immensely to the success of adoptive placements for the children in their care.

Once adoption is decided as a possible option for a child/ren, they will be referred to the Adoption Service. An Independent Birth Parent Counsellor will then be allocated who will counsel the birth family/extended family members.

As the child's foster carer you will be asked to complete a report provided to you, regarding the child. This report will detail the child's behaviour, relationships, personality and any other relevant issues. It is important that the report is as detailed as possible and gives an accurate picture of the needs of the child. If you wish, your fostering social worker can assist you in completing this report.



Before an adoptive placement can be pursued the Agency Decision Maker must recommend that adoption be in the child's best interests.

The information that you provide will be very important in helping the adoption social workers identify which of the adoptive families they are working with may be most suitable for the child. It may be that a family cannot be identified immediately and plans have to be made about creating profiles for these children to present in adoption exchange days and adoption publicity.

Once a family has been identified arrangements will be made for you to meet the prospective adoptive parents. This may be before or after adoption panel has met to consider the match.

Once the 'match' has been agreed, introductions between the child and adoptive parents can be arranged. The introductory period for a child is a very demanding task and emotions are often very high on both sides. The child and the foster carers can experience feelings of grief, separation and loss, whilst the adoptive parents can often feel very guilty about "taking" the child from the foster carers. Research tells us however, that when all adults work well together, in the interests of the child, the move on will be positive for the child and this will bode well for the future.

As the foster carer for the child you will be asked to have the first part of the introductions in your home, where the child feels most safe and secure. This will involve the adoptive parents spending amounts of time in your home with the child, helping the child with routines, reading bedtime stories etc. This can feel very intrusive for foster carers, but it is an essential part of the moving on process. It is important that a child receives the "emotional permission" from their current carers that it is safe to move on.

The second part of the introductions usually involves the child spending increasing amounts of time with the prospective adopters. As the child's carer you will be expected to spend some time with the child at the adoptive parents' home in order to help the child feel safe and to ensure that the plan moves on.

It is important for the child you are moving on to hear that you are positive about the move and happy to see them with their 'forever family'. This includes showing them pictures of their adoptive parents and referring to them as 'mummy' and 'daddy'. Despite this being an emotional time for all, the child needs to know that you, as the foster carer, want them to be with their forever family. This is often the final part of the "emotional permission".

Once the child has moved on the adoptive parents may, on occasion, telephone you and ask for your advice and assistance, as the person who previously 'parented' the child.