

Children's Services

Guidance to ensure respect for the belongings of children and young people

Version	Date	Author	Title/Team	Review Date
1.0	25.11.2024	Theresa Brooks	Team Manager	25.11.2024

3 in 5 young people said that at least one, but usually more, of their personal belongings had been lost or damaged during a move in care.

Quote from my things matter

Purpose

1. No Care-experienced young person should ever have to experience the trauma linked to the loss of their belongings. These items are often significant links to their birth family and history and every action should be taken to keep these belongings safe and ensure they are treated with respect.
2. This Policy sets out the steps to be taken when a Children's Services employee is asked to look after information or items belonging to a child or young person receiving our services.
3. The requirements of this guidance apply in all circumstances where a Children's Services employee helps a child or young person who is known to Children Services to move home, or temporarily looks after some of their belongings.
4. Taking exceptional care of children and young people's belongings is fundamental social work value base however this guidance offers clarity to the process in order that children and young people's belongings are in clear line of sight organizationally and that children and young people do not have to experience the pain and trauma associated with the loss of important and sentimental items.
5. The underpinning principle is that children and young people's belongings should remain with them unless in very exceptional circumstances.

Implementation

Expectation that this is reviewed as part of all new employee's induction.

Expectation that this is considered in looked after reviews when appropriate.

Expectation that this is considered in all placement planning meetings regardless of whether the policy is being utilised

Expectation that this guidance is utilised across all children's services departments and is actively promoted and utilised

Expectation that commissioning colleagues share with key IFA providers on an annual basis – have you had this discussion?

Expectation that supervising social workers regularly discuss with foster carers – have you had this discussion?

Looking after the information or belongings of children and young people we support

1. Children's Services employees may occasionally be asked by a child or young person to look after items or personal information (life stories, photo albums) or other personal belongings for them.
2. Children's Service's should only agree to such requests where there are good grounds for them, and no suitable alternative exists. 'Good grounds' include, but are not limited to:
 - The child may be at risk of significant harm if they continue to keep the information/belongings with them.
 - The items have personal and/or financial value and are at risk of damage or destruction if they continue in the child's possession.
 - The items have personal and/or financial value and are at risk of being lost as the child moves between homes.
 - There is no alternative, and the child is in a very short-term placement.
3. Lack of space in the child's home would not normally be an acceptable reason for a Children's Services employees to look after their belongings.
4. Even where good grounds exist, the size and number of items stored for the child should be considered along with the space available
5. Authorisation from the team manager and building manager must be in place prior to belongings being stored. If previous foster carers store items then the supervising social worker should be consulted.
6. Practitioners are not to store belongings in their home or personal space such as car.

7. If belongings are remaining in places such as a previous carers, **Appendix A** must be included in the placement planning meeting where it will be agreed when these will be returned to the young person.
8. If it is agreed that belongings can be stored this must be in a secure and locked area agreed within the meeting between the practitioner working with the child, the team manager, BSO/BSM and/or building manager. Items must not be stored outside the location agreed.
9. The young person must be aware of the items being stored, the reasons why and where the items are. **Appendix A** must be shared with the child or person with parental responsibility if they are too young to agree.
10. Before any items are accepted on behalf of the child, they (or an individual with parental responsibility if the young person is not able to consent) should sign the form at **Appendix A** that details:
 - The child's name
 - The date of the agreement
 - The name of the employee receiving the items
 - Each item by name
 - Why the employee is taking care of the items
 - When they will be returned to the child or when this will be reviewed if the return date is unknown. A new form must be completed and uploaded upon this review date
 - location of items?
 - list of professionals who have been informed?
11. The employee should upload the completed form to the child's Mosaic record and add an explanatory case note.
12. Wherever items are stored, the location must be recorded on the child's Mosaic record. This must include the agreed date it will be returned to the child/young person or the date when the arrangements will be reviewed.
13. Items must be transported, stored and returned with respect and bin liners should NEVER be utilised. All personal items should be stored in appropriate bags/holdalls/suitcases which can be accessed from most area offices.

14. There needs to be a tracker for each service area that is held by the BSM which tracks all items stored, location and the review date, if reviews do not take place then there needs to be an escalation to the head of service
15. The storing of belongings for the child is to be reviewed in the social workers supervision every 4 weeks, an update is to be provided to the child and professionals aware of the storage of the belongings after each supervision. Discussion to be held with the child around the belongings and the plan around their belongings for each supervision so Appendix A can be updated and uploaded within supervision.

APPENDIX A

Form for confirming receipt of belongings from a child or young person

Name of young person and PIN	
Date of receipt	
Name of Derbyshire County Council employee receiving item(s)	
Number of items	
Description of each item	
Why child or young person needs help to look after the item(s)	
Where the items are located	
Professionals that are aware of the location of the items	
Date by which item(s) will be returned to the child or young person/the agreement reviewed.	
Date and signatures approval to store belongings (must be team manager, business service manager and building manager)	Team Manager: Date: Office Manager/BSM:..... Date:
Signature showing young person's consent (for all those aged 16 plus, and for younger children who are able to give consent)	