Children in Care

Placement and Care Planning Meetings - Practice Guidance 2020

This briefing sets out guidance relating to arranging and holding placement and care planning meetings when Children and Young People come into the care of the Local Authority.

This briefing should be read in conjunction with Section 4.1 of Newcastle Children’s Services Procedures Manual which can be accessed [here](https://newcastlechildcare.proceduresonline.com/contents.html).

When do I need to organise a Placement and Care Planning Meeting?

* A meeting must take place when a child or young person first comes into the care of the Local Authority.
* This meeting should be held before a child or young person comes into care but where this is not possible, must take place within 72 hours of a child or young person being accommodated.

**Subsequent Placements & Placement Moves**

* Where a child moves to a subsequent placement, a Placement and Care Planning meeting should be held prior to this or, if not possible, within 72 hours of any placement move. The primary focus of this meeting will be to update the Placement Plan but should also review the Care Plan

Where should the meeting be held and who should chair the meeting?

* The child’s social worker should arrange the meeting, in conjunction with either the foster carer’s supervising social worker or the residential care manager/key worker.
* The meeting should be held at a suitable venue that supports both carers and parents to attend.
* **All placement and care planning meetings should be chaired by the Team Manager of the child’s social worker. Where a P&CP Meeting is not chaired by the Team Manager, this must be agreed in advance by the relevant Service Manager.**

Who should attend the meeting and contribute to the planning process?

* The child’s social worker and team manager;
* Parents;
* The child or young person (subject to age and understanding);
* Foster carer (including connected carers) and their supervising social worker OR residential placement key worker and home manager;
* Consultation should also take place with other agencies that are involved with the child including school, health, youth justice service, other significant family members and other professionals involved with the child’s care.

**When do plans need to be completed?**

(Best Practice will mean that the Placement Plan and Care Plan should be prepared before a child or young person comes into care. However, we know that for many children this is not possible, and Placement and Care Planning Meetings are held following a child coming into our care)

* Care Planning Regulations stipulate that the Placement Plan should be completed and shared within 5 working days and the Care Plan completed and shared within 10 working days of the child being placed.

**Who should get copies of the Plans?**

* Copies of Plans should be given to parents, the carer (including residential care staff and settings) and child (subject to age and understanding).
* The IRO and fostering service also require a copy of the Plans. Practitioners therefore must ensure that both documents are complete and available to view on the child’s electronic file.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Practice Guidance | Our Working Principles |
| Arranging the Placement & Care Planning Meeting  Best Practice will mean that wherever possible, Placement & Care Planning Meetings are held prior to a child coming in to care. The meeting MUST be arranged within 72 hours of the child or young person coming into care.  Parents must be encouraged and supported to attend the Placement & Care Planning Meeting. Their views, contributions and involvement in a child’s placement and care plan support us to progress interventions which keep the possibility of reunification and how this will be achieved, central to decision making and the actions we take.  You must therefore consider WHERE the meeting will be held and ensure the venue supports both carers and parents to attend.  You must consider the timing of the meeting, considering parents or carers work/childcare commitments.  You should consider, if it is appropriate or possible to include the child or young person in the meeting and if not, how they will be supported to understand the meeting, why it is happening and the outcome.  The meeting should also consider what the child or young person’s understanding of their current circumstances is. And where appropriate and reasonable, what explanation they will be given that is honest and balanced and supports them to understand what is happening and what will happen next. | Child Centred  Working Together  Family Solutions  Balanced Response  Challenge and Support |
| Placement Planning  A portion of the meeting will focus on the child’s placement and the plan for how the child will be cared for. Supporting parents to discuss with carers how their child will be cared for within the placement is a critical function of the Placement and Care Planning Meetings.  The meeting should include discussion in relation to the child’s routine, diet, health needs – including details related to permissions for medical treatment being agreed, schooling and family time arrangements.  You should consider the age and development of the child – for example, for babies and small children, consideration must be given to how key health and developmental information will be shared with the parents, what formula a baby is used to or should be used and how family time may be supported with additional correspondence and photographs/ updates. If the child wears nappies or how toilet training is to be progressed etc.  For older children – consideration should be given to access to extracurricular activities and hobbies, access to technology and social media agreed and arrangements for the child or young person to see and spend time with friends and how this will be managed.  If the child or young person is known to be at risk of going missing or is at risk of criminal or sexual exploitation, the placement plan must consider what strategies and risk mitigation plans are in place to respond to and reduce risk. This should include what arrangements will be in place for the completion of Return Home Interviews.  We know that for all children, education is critical and therefore the meeting must consider how carers will support the child to attend school or college. Where there is not an appropriate education provision the meeting will need to consider how this will be progressed and escalated without delay. In particular, consideration should be given to travel to and from school. Remember, as the child’s Social Worker you will be invited to attend their PEP meeting organised by the Virtual School. This is a key opportunity to discuss the child’s education in more detail. | Child Centred  Working Together  Family Solutions  Challenge and Support |
| Delegated Authority  It is essential that as part of the Placement and Care Planning Meeting the Delegated Authority Tool is completed.  Delegated Authority ensures that all parties are informed and in agreement about who will be responsible for day to day and key decision making related to the child or young person.  The tool clearly identifies which decisions can only be made by those with Parental Responsibility for the child and which decisions we can make together. It is often a very useful process in helping parents to understand how critical and central they are to the decisions about their child at a time when they can often feel disempowered due to their child coming into Local Authority Care.  The tool can support practitioners, carers and family to create and agree the placement plan and must be completed for each child in our care.  Parents and carers must be provided with a copy of the Delegated Authority Tool once it is complete and it must be recorded on the child’s file.  From decisions about school trips, to getting a haircut, to holiday’s abroad – the Delegated Authority Tool supports the family and carers to work together in the best interests of the child – and can avoid confusion or delay for a child’s day to day activities and needs.  Of particular importance are the decisions related to permissions for a child to receive medical treatment or intervention and these must be discussed within the meeting and detailed within the delegated authority, which should be placed on the child’s file and shared with parents and carers. | Child Centred  Working Together  Family Solutions  Balanced Response |
| Care Planning  The meeting’s function outside of the immediate placement plan, is to consider the child’s care planning.  This must include immediate reference to what steps will be taken or work progressed, to support (wherever reasonable and proportionate) the child’s return to the care of the parents.  Therefore, the Placement and Care Planning Meeting will need to agree and set out the Local Authority’s plan for the child.  We must be open, honest and specific.  Practitioners and managers should identify what assessment work will be undertaken and what we will need to see evidence of within the home, or by the parent(s) and over what period of time, if a plan of reunification is to be progressed.  Working in this way supports us to work together with parents to return children home safely, or evidence why this has not been possible. When we clearly set out what needs to happen and who is responsible, we hold ourselves and others accountable for their actions and keep the child’s needs and safety central to our decision making and plans.  Identifying initial care planning in this way also supports us to reflect more keenly on progress made by the 28 Day Child in Care Review and what may need to happen next to bolster existing plans as well as identify any gaps in support. | Child Centred  Working Together  Family Solutions  Safely at Home  Balanced Response  Challenge and Support |