

Placement Request Guidance: Understanding the Process

The Purpose of this Guidance

To help ensure everyone, across the service is clear about who does what and when, regarding placement requests. We want to ensure that placement searches achieve the Right Home, First Time for all children and young people and that everyone involved is clear what support is being offered to make that move successful.

The Process

1. Children's social worker completes the Placement Request Form (PRF) on Eclipse. We can only accept PRFs submitted as a *new form* on Eclipse. We will not be able to accept word versions or old Eclipse forms re-opened and amended.
2. Children's social worker completes and submits the PRF on Eclipse and completes all steps in the Placement Request Work List. This triggers the Placement Search and Responses Work List which should be reassigned to the Placements Team (ORG4796). Please also forward senior manager approval for a search to the Children's Placements Mailbox. This acts as an additional measure to ensure we've received the search request.
3. Placements Team will quality assure the PRF and provide feedback to the children's social worker if anything needs updating, clarifying or amending prior to a search commencing. A placement coordinator will be allocated at this stage to support with any guidance the social worker needs.
4. Once a final version of the PRF is received, the placements team will commence a search of relevant foster carers and providers.
5. If a foster carer or provider feels they might be able to offer a suitable home, then an Expression of Interest will be made. This is sent to the placements team who forward it to the children's social worker (copying in the children's team manager). This Expression of Interest should include fees and provisions to be offered (although these are subject to amendment following discussion between the provider and the children's social worker).

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6. The children's social worker should talk to the carer/provider within 24 hours / 1 working day, to clarify any questions that either party has, and agree if it is a suitable match. If the match is suitable then also agree the exact package of care that is to be offered. This could result in a change to the initial quoted fees, based on the agreed needs of the child or young person.
7. The children's social worker should keep the Placements Team informed throughout, regarding these conversations, both positive and negative outcomes. Any rejections or declines by the children's social worker need to be agreed with their manager and reasons recorded on Eclipse (case notes).
8. Once the children's social worker has agreed upon an option for a child or young person, they need to let the placements team know what package of care they have agreed.
9. The children's social worker needs to ensure they have the correct funding approval for the agreed package of care. This needs to be an e-mail or Manager Decision Form on Eclipse from the relevant area or senior manager (in line with scheme of delegation). If the provision is over £2000 then High Cost Funding applies and the children's social worker will need to ensure a senior manager, at the appropriate level, has approved this. The placements team can provide the precise details needed for funding approval.
10. Whilst funding agreement is being sought, the placements team will review the offer and check if any quality assurance or spot contracts are needed from colleagues in Commissioning / Procurement. The Placements Team will formally accept the offer with the provider and notify them that funding is being sought by the children's social worker.
11. The children's social worker should maintain contact with the carer/provider and commence transition planning as well as agreeing a move-in date. The placements team need to be kept informed of the planned move-in date.
12. Once a child or young person has moved in, an Individual Placement Agreement (IPA) is drafted. This will be based on the needs and outcomes you have detailed in the PRF and anything that was agreed within the funding approval – providing the placements team are

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informed of this. Placement Coordinators will check the PRF, Expression of Interest and funding agreements to inform the IPA.

13. The Placements Team will send the IPA to the provider for them to sign. At this stage the children's social worker and team manager will be copied in stating '*SW/TM – Please upload to the child's file and let us know urgently if there is anything that needs amending.*'
14. The Placements Team will raise the relevant finance form and complete an 'outstanding documents' form on Eclipse. Outstanding documents include the IPA and any spot purchase contracts for 'off-framework' provision.
15. When the IPA is received back from a provider then the placements team completes the outstanding documents form on Eclipse to record the IPA as being returned. If there has been a spot contract, then Procurement need to confirm that this has been returned and is satisfactory.
16. The Placements Team will send the IPA to the relevant Locality Director/Senior Manager for authorisation.
17. When received back from the Locality Director/Senior Manager, the final copy of the IPA is sent back to the provider for their records and uploaded to the Searches and Responses Form on Eclipse. This is completed by the Placements Team.
18. At that point, the Placements Team file is closed for that child / young person.
19. If at any point, the fees are amended the Placements Team raise a further IPA and finance form. These are sent to the provider and Locality Director/Senior Manager for authorisation.

It is important to note the contract does not set out what the provider is agreeing to; it is the IPA that sets out expectations/outcomes.

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Framework providers will usually have exact (contracted) costs and packages of care, with some limited room for additions / amendments or negotiation.

A note regarding expressions of interest that are sent to children's social workers:

Contact with the carers/providers must always happen at the very earliest opportunity and no later than 24 hours / 1 working day after the expressions of interest have been sent out.

There is an ongoing challenge regarding the number of placements available and often other Local Authorities are exploring the same vacancies, at the same time. We want to avoid losing good offers as a result of delayed responses and decision making. The Placements Team must also be notified of the outcome within this timescale. Where this timescale is not adhered to, area managers and/or senior managers may be notified. This is to ensure children and young people have the opportunity for the best home available in the timeliest way.