



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**Terms of Reference Document:
Line-by-Line Placement Funding Review
Meetings**

UNCLASSIFIED

Document Control Information

Title: **Terms of Reference Document: Line-by-Line Placement Funding Review Meetings**

Date: May 2021

Review date: May 2022

Version: 1

Classification: Unclassified

Owner: Adam Davis, Assistant Director, Social Care and Early Help

| Version | Date | Description |
|-----------|------------|---|
| Version 1 | April 2021 | Terms of Reference Document: Line-by-Line Placement Funding Review Meetings |

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Attendance

Line-by-Line Placement Funding Review Meetings should be attended by the following:

- Finance Specialist for Children's Services
- Placements Lead
- Service Managers
- Team Managers
- Assistant Director of Social Care and Early Help
- Business Support
- Finance and Data Officer
- Continuing Healthcare Assessor

Frequency

Line-by-Line Placement Funding Review Meetings should take place **monthly**.

Our Context

Wokingham Children Services provides and funds placements and support for most of its looked after children and some care leavers. The placement type and level of support or care is dependent on a number of variables and factors, including the age and level of need of the child or young person in question. These variables will of course change over time and are not static. For younger children we need to balance stability, permanency, and their assessed needs to ensure that the context and the placement type meets their needs as they grow and develop. This will be informed by assessment/care plans and referral information, alongside availability of resources. As a principle, wherever possible the care plan will always be for the child to live and grow in a local family setting. If this is not possible at the start of a care journey, the care plan will be kept under review to establish whether it can become an option as needs develop or change. This of course will need to be balanced against the other principle of establishing permanency for a child. In short, this entails providing children with *"a sense of security, continuity, commitment and identity ... [and] a secure, stable and loving family to support them through childhood and beyond"*.

Our Placement Strategy highlights the following principles:

- *We will work in partnership so that children can remain at home with their family or with their connected networks and return to their care if safe to do so.*
- *Where children cannot safely remain at home or live in their connected networks, we will have a range of provision that can meet the child's needs, utilising best practice and innovative approaches to deliver the best outcomes.*

- *We will ensure robust and timely decision making with the intent to have the majority of children in familial based settings which offer permanence close to Wokingham to avoid other disruption in their lives. Where we have placed children, we will ensure the provision is of good quality, providing good value, meets the needs of the child and enables them to meet their full potential. We will ask 'would this be good enough for my child?'*
- *We will work with relevant partner agencies such as education, health and mental health to ensure that children are supported as required to meet their needs and that there are effective mechanisms to agree funding and quality assure any placements made.*
- *We will work constructively with providers of care to ensure we can identify the range of provision required to meet the needs of our children; for the most effective costs; now and in the future.*
- *We will work with other Local Authority partners to ensure we work effectively, get the best value from commissioning frameworks and explore how we could commission differently with existing or new partners to achieve value for money and quality provision.*
- *We will ensure that we holistically assess children's needs for the immediate and longer term; continually review care plans, resolving issues as they arise to build resilience and independence for the future.*

Wokingham has approximately 109 looked after children and around 96 care leavers. Over 60% of our children live in a fostering setting, we have around 10% placed with parents and 15% who will be subject to a Placement Order or on their Journey towards a Special Guardianship Order. Our care leavers live in a range of settings, with examples of young people living in their own accommodation, in Semi-independent living, utilising a *staying put* arrangement, or having returned to their families. We also have a small cohort who are in what is considered unsuitable accommodation, for example temporary accommodation.

Our Overarching Purpose

The overarching purpose of Line-by-Line Placement Funding Review Meetings are:

- To work collaboratively across finance, commissioning, and social care to ensure that we have an overview, grip and grasp of our placement expenditure and budget.
- To problem solve and ensure that children and care leavers are in the right placement with the right support to meet their needs.
- To understand placement trends, themes patterns, and practice cultures or norms.
- To ensure that the current structures and processes - for example, decision making, referral to commissioning and Resources Panel - are appropriate, curious and rigorous.
- To provide scrutiny and offer assurance in terms of our placement spend.
- To drive and support the savings highlighted as part of the MTPF.

While it is not a care planning forum, it may challenge and scrutinise some of the overriding assumptions, purpose or activities of a care plan.

The Aim

By holding regular Line-by-Line Placement Funding Review Meetings, we hope to achieve a single accurate record of all our children's and care leaver's placement cost/expenditure that can be scrutinised and provide assurance of appropriate expenditure. Our intention is that this will evidence a clear grasp and record of activity to address unnecessary expenditure and promote 21good problem solving and cross-council working. In addition, these meetings will ensure that across the system we use our available resources and funds appropriately, efficiently and proportionality to meet needs.

The Objectives

The objectives of Line-by-Line Placement Funding Review Meetings are:

- To maintain a repeatable exemplar/data set across the various placement types and cohorts, that captures the required information.
- To ensure that all placements are financially mapped.
- To maintain a data set that facilitates and supports financial modelling, predictions, and forecasts, giving an accurate Year to Date summary
- To provide clear start date and end dates of costs and provisions
- To maintain a data set that can be filtered to assist overview by cohort or placement type and gives an average unit cost to identify outliers.
- To maintain data that supports dialogue and generates activity to address or reduce high costs.
- To provide a log of activity to evidence impact.
- To identify joint funding opportunities, ensure that cost sharing is in place, or identify actions to address any gaps.
- To link the assessment of needs, the identified resource, invoice/payment control and financial Impact.
- To ensure that Universal Credit is claimed when available for the 18+ cohort.
- To identify areas of practice and culture that may not support appropriate and efficient use of council resources and/or funds.