# Guidance and process for placing children in externally commissioned placements

**Summary of external provision for placements**

In house provision will always be sought first, however, this isn’t always possible and placements sometimes have to be found that are bought in from providers external to the Council.

These are known as external placements, but they can be both within and outside the borders of Calderdale. Calderdale belongs to 3 frameworks which are a list of pre-approved providers for a particular provision of care and support as well as having a direct contract with a local independent residential provider. We have a framework for each of the following: residential, fostering (through independent fostering agencies, known as IFAs) and semi-independent accommodation and support for young people aged 16 – 25yrs. It is important to make the distinction that both the residential and IFA providers are regulated through Ofsted, the semi-independent providers are not as they provide support and not registered care.

**External Placements Panel**

An internal panel that meets 3 weeks out of 4 to consider and agree placements that can’t be made in house, as well as ratifying placements that it has been necessary to make outside of panel, such as unplanned / emergency placements. Each week will rotate focus on each of the placement sectors. The panel will also consider and agree changes to external care placements, including moving from an internal to an external placement and vice versa. Decisions on whether or not additional resources should be allocated to support a current placement or an internal placement will also be made at this panel. Likewise, the panel will undertake a review of all external placements and support packages over time.

**Complex Needs Panel**

A multi-agency panel meeting 6 weekly to consider and agree joint funding for placements for children with complex physical and / or mental health needs. Representatives from the CCG and SEN are present, alongside representatives from Children’s Social Care to also review cases to ensure the agreed provision is still meeting the child’s needs at best value. Cases will be referred on to this panel from the External Placements Panel.

# External Placements Panel membership and agenda

The current membership for the External Placements Panel is as follows;

* SM, Permanence & Sufficiency (CHAIR)
* Team Manager, CLA
* Team Manager, Fostering
* Residential Service Lead, Early Intervention & Safeguarding
* Service Manager, Virtual School
* Practice Manager, CLA
* Senior External Placements Officer
* External Placements Officer
* Project Support Officer (minute taker)– membership and agenda process
* Commissioning and Planning Manager
* Finance Officer
* Outreach Manager, Early Intervention & Safeguarding
* Senior Lead Nurse for CYP (CCG)
* Service Manager, Pathways Leaving Care (in attendance for semi-independent focus week)
* Practice Manager, Pathways Leaving Care (in attendance for semi-independent focus week)
* Team Leader, Housing & Green Economy (in attendance for semi-independent focus week)

**Agenda**

EPP meets weekly (3 out of 4 weeks) on a Monday morning and discusses the following items on the agenda;

* Placement Searches
  + Live searches / New / Change of External Placement Requests / on hold / Closed External Searches and the Live In-house search summary
  + External searches where there are no offers – review contingency plans
  + Inhouse searches which may become external
  + Future planned searches
  + Discuss, if necessary, where a referral to the complex needs panel is required
* Court Orders
  + To note if there are there any up and coming court orders likely to result in CYP being placed in LA care and needing an external placement
* Disruptions and / or notice given
  + To inform panel if notice has been given on placements
  + Disruptions with placements including inhouse placements that may become external
* Additional funding requests
  + Transport, additional staff, extension of funding for additional staff / support as well as a request to retain the placement
  + These will either be brought to panel by the SW as a request if planned, or brought to panel to ratify if approval has been given outside of the meeting (emergency)
* Review of cases
  + To review additional funding where this was only authorised for a set period and to review that the placement still best meets the needs of the CYP
  + Annual review of IFA placements
  + 6 monthly review of residential placements
  + Review after 6 weeks in new placement for 16+
* Provider issues / concerns
  + Known issues / concerns from Social Worker or White Rose commissioning colleagues
* Ofsted ratings
  + To inform the panel if there have been any concerns with downward ratings for IFAs / residential provision and / or restriction notifications received from Ofsted
* Monthly Reviews 16+

Service Manager, Pathways Leaving Care, Practice Manager, Pathways Leaving Care, Team Leader, Housing & Green Economy and Team Manager Adults / Transitions to attend each 4th week to review:

* + Semi-independent placements
  + 17yrs old leading up to their 18th birthday
  + Co-allocated CLA: those with a SW and Pathway Worker as at 17.5yrs.
  + Those with the Leaving Care Service (over 18yrs)
  + Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children
  + Staying Put Agreements

Where additional support is identified then the social worker should request to come to panel to discuss the placement and seek approval at panel.

Team managers will be asked on a regular basis to provide a brief update on external placements such as those in residential that have been in placement for 6mths or more. This allows the panel to understand if the placement still best fits the needs of the CYP and that permanence plans are in place, as well as any transition to adulthood plans are in place too. It is not always the case that CYP will be able to access the same levels of care once they are 18yrs so their transition to adulthood, and the expectations of all around the levels of care are paramount to the case review function of the External Placement Panel.

**Process to follow to gain permission to search for an external placement and then place.**

Once it has been agreed that a child will require a placement and the relevant approval processes followed, the Fostering service will search for in-house provision. Information is shared within the Placement Finding Folder so all relevant parties can access the documentation in, or out, of hours.

* Once internal fostering / residential options have been exhausted, Fostering provide summary of inhouse options for the EPT, along with a copy of the profile.
* EPT completes the 'External Search & Placement Form' to seek approval for an external search to commence. This is sent to the CLA and Permanency & Sufficiency SM for sign off.
* If approved, Service Manager Permanence & Sufficiency then forwards request to Assistant Director, Early Intervention & Safeguarding for approval
* Service Manager Permanence & Sufficiency emails Fostering and EPT re decision. If approval is not given due to more information required, then the form is resubmitted with the required information, or other options are considered
* If approval is given, Service Manager Permanence & Sufficiency emails Fostering and EPT with the signed External Search & Placement Form (Section 2)
* EPT circulate the child's profile to the relevant providers and any suitable offers are emailed to the SW, including documentation as per provision type i.e., Form F/ SOP. The SW is asked to respond within one day re how they wish to proceed. Offers for residential with education placements are also sent to Virtual School
* The Daily Placement Finding Record and EP Tracker will be updated throughout the search
* SW will be asked to confirm a contingency plan in the event that a suitable external placement cannot be found
* If the SW wishes to proceed with an offer, EPT Updates Section 3 (*Summary of placements*) of the External Search & Placement Form, sending it the SW to complete Section 4 (*Matching*) and Section 5 (*Placement checks*) who then returns it to EPT
* For Residential with Education placements, and where there is no EHCP, the External Placement Form must include full details of Education costs in order to obtain approval for the funding of this.
* For placements with a 'therapy' element the form and details of the placement are sent to the CCG
* EPT then send the form to Service Manager CLA & Service Manager Permanence & Sufficiency for approval
* Service Manager Permanence & Sufficiency emails re decision. If approval is not given due to more information required, then the form is resubmitted with the required information, or other placement options are considered if placement will not be approved
* If approval is given, Service Manager Permanence & Sufficiency then forwards request to Assistant Director, Early Intervention & Safeguarding for approval
* Service Manager Permanence & Sufficiency emails EPT with the signed External Search & Placement Form (Section 6)
* If the placement is 20 miles outside of the Calderdale boundary, the approval form is forwarded to Director of Children's & Young People's service by AD Early Intervention & Safeguarding
* Once agreed, EPT advise provider that placement has been approved and reiterates agreed costs.
* External Placement Officer updates monitoring spreadsheet and confirms cost details to Finance Officer.
* SW liaises with provider to agree start date.
* Project Support Officer arranges for contracts to be issued, ensures provider is set up on invoicing system and completes post placement checklist
* The CYP will also be added to the review schedule for placements being reviewed at the External Placement Panel.

**Out of hours placements**

When a placement is required outside of hours, this is managed by the Emergency Duty Team (EDT).

EDT will receive daily a list of Calderdale's foster carers who have agreed to be on the EDT list as an emergency foster carer. The EPT will ensure an up to date list is provided of IFA's who can be contacted out of hours for a placement.

EDT worker contact in house foster carers first as identified on the list and only then use the IFA list.

The EDT worker would also approach the in-house residential provision if necessary.

EDT will notify the Fostering service the next day who will, if external provision has been used, inform the EPT.