**Access to Resources Panel**

**Terms of Reference**

**Updated 1st July 2023**

**Introduction**

The Access to Resources panel has a critical function in identifying children and young people who can be maintained within their families or with their existing carers with packages of support provided as part of the Edge of Care and offer. In addition, it has a critical function in terms of identifying the need for specialist assessments or intervention, in line with a child or young person and their families’ assessed needs and care planning.

Children and families may require additional resources in order to ensure that children are kept safe or where they have additional needs in order to improve outcomes. The Panel’s function is to consider applications for resources which are not already provided for within Children’s Services or partner agency provision.

Panel will also consider situations whereby there are significant financial implications for the Local Authority, which exceed the cumulative financial thresholds for management agreement in line with the scheme of delegation.

The panel will also provide oversight of cases for those children requiring significant financial packages as a result of needs arising from their additional needs or disability, such as Direct Payments, enabling and day care services and serves as the forum through which these packages of care are robustly and appropriately reviewed.

**Panel Membership**

HOS Regulated Services (Chair)

Service Manager, Regulated Services (Deputy)

Service Manager, Placements, Day Care Services, Short Breaks and Family Time (Deputy)

Team Manager, Edge of Care

Head of the Virtual School

Named Nurse for cared for and care experienced young people

Designated Named Nurse for cared for and care experienced young people

Adult Social Care Transition Lead

Representative from the Fostering Service

Family Group Conference Team Manager (by consultation)

**Aims and Responsibilities**

* To ensure that children’s wishes and feelings and their needs are central to decision-making.
* To provide appropriate oversight to ensure that decisions made are proportionate, efficient and sufficient, whilst ensuring that financial resources are appropriately allocated and provide best value for money.
* To ensure every attempt has been made to support, advise and protect children as part of social work practice before consideration is given to the move towards legal intervention in a child and families lives
* To offer appropriate and restorative scrutiny and challenge, when considering packages of care and support for children and young people, and their families.
* To ensure that, where possible, every consideration is given to maintaining a child or young person safely within their home environment or extended family through the provision of edge of care support services.
* To ensure that appropriate and proportionate specialist intervention and assessment is accessible at the right time for children and families, to inform overall care planning.
* To ensure that children and young people will have had the advantage of a Family Group Conference to determine an understanding of what is required to achieve successful family reunification or, alternatively, to determine other options that need to be considered when edge of care intervention is being requested.
* To promote the creative and appropriate use of available in-house resources to meet the needs of children and their families.
* To ensure that Edge of Care resources are planned and implemented to meet the needs of the child, young person and the parents or carers.
* To be clear and transparent in respect of decision-making.

**Who will refer**

The social worker as the lead professional will refer to Panel.

**When to refer to the panel**

The use of the Access To Resources Panel is in relation to situations whereby:

* It has been assessed that a child or young person requires an edge of care package to prevent a family crisis which may result in children or young people avoidably becoming cared for.
* It has been identified that a child or family require a specialist provision of support such as a specialist assessment or therapeutic intervention, which cannot be provided by employment of current internal resources (and which has not already been agreed at Legal Gateway Panel). In line with the scheme of delegation, this relates to packages of care which exceed £1000 cumulatively for any one child.

**When NOT to refer to the panel**

* The Panel cannot provide agreement for a child to come into care under Section 20. Heads of Service together within the ‘critical friend’ framework have delegated authority to agree this.
* The Panel will not consider permission to search for placements. Please refer to the scheme of delegation in respect of who can provide agreement for placement searches and to accept placement options. All placements outside of the Local Authority resources need to be presented to Independent Placement Overview Panel.
* The Panel cannot initiate the process for a Connected Carers assessment under Regulation 24; please see the separate referral pathway into the fostering assessment team in these circumstances.

**Process**

Referrals to the Panel must be discussed with and approved by a team manager and Service Manager, after considering the prompt questions below, alternative options and potential solutions. In all cases, it is expected that a referral for a Family Group Conference (FGC) has been made especially if the referral relates to an edge of care intervention.

The social worker must also ensure that the following documentation is updated and available on LCS for Panel members to consider prior to the meeting:

* The latest Child and Family or Pathway Review (for 16 and 17 year olds) assessment (no more than twelve months old)
* Pathway Plan (in relation to care experienced young people)
* Chronology
* Genogram
* Outcome of the Family Group Conference or confirmation that the referral has been made.
* For referrals in respect of Edge of Care intervention, the referral **MUST** contain an outline of the edge of care package that is being requested and the intended outcomes for this intervention in terms of how this will meet the child’s needs. The referral must also clearly evidence that consent has been sought and gained for this intervention.
* The referral **MUST** include an outline of the service being requested with start and end dates and a breakdown of costings. Panel cannot agree requests without a planned end date or without the specific costings for the proposed intervention, assessment or service.

The Panel does not replace the usual care planning or supervisory function of social workers and their managers. However, if there are circumstances whereby a Team Manager is uncertain whether a referral should be made to the Panel, they should discuss the case with the responsible Service Manager or Head of Service for guidance.

The Panel meets on weekly basis on a Tuesday morning and upon referral, you will be provided with a time slot to attend and present the referral.

Referrals to Panel must be made by the preceding Thursday in order to be listed if possible on the next Tuesday Panel. The referral will be made on single referral form (soon to be replaced by the referral form on LCS) to the panel administrator at permanencepanel@torbay.gov.uk. The administrator will then notify the social worker and team manager of the time to attend.

All Panel invitations must be responded to, to indicate and confirm attendance. If you cannot attend Panel, you need to ensure that you nominate someone who can attend on your behalf to present, for example an Advanced Social Worker or Team Manager. If nobody attends to present on your behalf, the Panel slot will be cancelled.

**What will happen in Panel**

The Chair will provide a summary of the referral, the child’s circumstances and the rationale for the request as outlined in the referral. The social worker, accompanied by the Team Manager, will then be invited to present the case to the Panel. The Chair and other Panel Members will ask questions about the referral and then will come to a view in respect of the decision and rationale for this decision, as well as a clear date for review if the package being sought is ongoing.

The Panel Administrator will note the actions agreed from the meeting. Once these have been agreed by the Chair, they will be uploaded on to the child’s LCS case file.

If you would like to have a further discussion with the Chair about the rationale for the Panel’s decision-making, please let the Chair know and this will be arranged.

It is the responsibility of the social worker to communicate decisions made in Panel in an appropriate way to children and families.

**Presentation Guidance for Social Workers and Team Managers**

Here are some prompts questions to help you to prepare for your presentation to Access to Resources Panel:

* What am I aiming to achieve for this child or their family through this request? What impact will the service or intervention or assessment have on the child, their family and the overall care planning?
* What has already been explored to meet this need? Have we considered whether there are resources within the family and explored this through a Family Meeting or Family Group Conference? Have we considered the use of internal resources, either within teams or services or through exploration of enabling or day care services, or support from other foster carers to name but a few examples?
* What would the key benefits of this intervention be? What might some of the risks be (for example, a transport package may resolve an immediate need to support a child to and from school but what might the impact of the journey be and the impact of a succession of unfamiliar people being part of this child’s routine)?
* How would the impact of this service or intervention be understood and reviewed? How would be know, if this is an externally commissioned service, that it is achieving the intended outcomes for the child? How would this be evidenced? What would the review timeframe be?
* What would the exit plan in terms of the ending of the intervention or service look like?
* Has the child and the family consented to the proposed intervention or service?
* What are the views, wishes and feelings of the child / young person?
* What are the views of the parents?
* What might the impact of the proposed intervention or service be on other family members, including the child’s siblings or others living in the home or placement?