



DARLINGTON
Borough Council

Practice Solutions Panel Terms of Reference and Practice Guidance

Children's Social Care, People Group

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Solutions Panel Terms of Reference and Practice Guidance

Purpose

- To support practitioners when working with children and families where additional support is needed.
- To ensure children who need to be in care are given the right support before becoming looked after and when they do become looked after, it is in the right place and with the right support.
- To ensure there is the best use of internal and external resources to support families.

Before attending panel

- You will have discussed your concerns with your Team Manager and explored all options available including FGC/KFT or Family Worker support.
- If you are seeking a placement for a child, this should be considered in a Legal Gateway meeting before coming to panel.

When to come to panel

- When you are worried the existing support for a family is not meeting the child/family's needs and additional resources are needed.
- When a child needs to become looked after and this has already been agreed in a Legal Gateway Meeting chaired by a Head of Service.
- When you are worried a child is at risk of becoming looked after without additional support.
- When a child's placement is becoming fragile, at risk of breaking down or notice has been served.
- When you believe expert support is needed via hair strand testing or expert assessments/therapeutic input.
- When you require an external resource for a child.
- When a financial assessment has been completed and this has identified support which should be offered (this could be an SGO, CAO or adoption allowance)
- When you believe a child's needs are such that the enhanced foster care professional fee should be applied or if an IFA requests respite care or a fee increase related to the needs of the child.

Who should attend panel?

- It will usually be the child's social worker as lead professional attending panel. They may attend alongside other key partner such as YPJS, Virtual School or Adoption Tees Valley.
- If the request is for an enhanced payment for in-house foster carers, the carers supervising social worker will complete the paperwork and present to panel alongside the child's social worker.
- If an adoption support allowance is requested, Adoption Tees Valley must attend and complete an adoption support needs assessment.

Membership

- Head of Service from Children's Services (Chair)
- Service Manager from Children's Services (Deputy Chair)
- Representative from SEN
- Representative from the Virtual School
- Representative from Cedar's
- Placement Officer
- Fostering Team Manager
- Representative from KFT/FGC
- Representative from Commissioning
- Representative from the therapeutic service
- Representative from BSF

Roles and responsibilities of members

Chair

- Chair meetings, ensuring the views of all members are taken into consideration on how best to meet the assessed needs as outlined by the presenting social worker;
- Agree the recommendations, proposals and action plans of the meeting;
- Promote best practice within the resources available and ensure timescales for actions are given;

- Agree the allocation of tasks to members and /or practitioners that may facilitate the placement or support package;
- Ensure constructive questioning and challenge to the proposed placement or support package.

Members will:

- Contribute to the discussion of the referral and supporting documentation presented;
- Provide expertise on the proposed plan, quality of service (current or planned) how these will meet the child or young person's needs and how they will influence more successful outcomes;
- Advise on the availability of internal services. Where options are limited, consider alternative, creative solutions and where appropriate take referrals for their service to ensure an early response;
- Ensure agreed recommendations/decisions which require action are completed within agreed timescales;
- Comment upon the quality and appropriateness of the services proposed/provided to Children and Young People;

SEN Representative will:

- Offer advice and guidance on the most appropriate route to ensure the best possible educational outcomes for Children and Young People.

Placements will:

- Offer advice and guidance regarding potential placements or community support arrangements.
- Progress referrals for externally provided (independent sector) placements and support service arrangements for children, in line with the child's social care assessed need.

- Update and advise on placement and community support service sufficiency.

Commissioning will:

- Provide advice and guidance in respect of suitable potential providers to meet need, taking into account regulatory requirements.
- Challenge additional funding requests for existing external provision where the provider has a commissioned arrangement.
- Advise individual teams/workers as to the appropriate route for individual child level service/support arrangements to ensure assessed needs are met. This advice will also confirm which arrangements do not require commissioning involvement and can be progressed at an operational service level.
- Co-ordinate with and work alongside Contracts Officers to address any concerns relating to the quality of commissioned service arrangements.
- Working alongside contracts, lead provider concern intelligence gathering and co-ordination.
- Profile case discussions to identify emerging gaps and trends to inform future commissioning intentions and strategic priorities.

What resource can the panel allocate?

The panel will confirm the following resources:

- Internal fostering placements (including respite services);
- Internal residential resources.
- SGO/CAO/Adoption/Fostering allowances
- Access to Cedar's short break or outreach support

- Access to KFT/FGC support

And allocate the following:

- Agreement to fund externally provided placements (the principle is to maintain the child/ young person within their local communities wherever possible or within a 20 mile radius);
- Additional resources required to support or maintain a child's situation additional to that the services currently have access to. .

Processes

Timing:

- Referrals and supporting documentation to be sent to panel Administrator by noon on the Tuesday preceding panel
- The panel will meet every Thursday between 10:00 and 12:00;
- Venue: Teams
- Allocated workers will be given a slot and panel will call you in when your slot is ready

Documentation required:

- Panel referral form (on LCS)
- Financial assessment for any allowances

Link to Complex Needs:

- The chair of panel is a member of the Complex Needs
- If your request is for joint funding with health, you should attend Complex Needs panel

Approval of resources out of panel:

- Requests may be considered in the interim between panels in emergencies, i.e. where the decision to accommodate a child or young person, and the placement cannot wait until the next meeting.

Conflict resolution

In cases where there is no consensus as to the outcome of a referral to the panel the Chair or Vice Chair will discuss with the Assistant Director for a final decision. If the outcome of panel is challenged either by the practitioner or family, this will be considered by the Assistant Director who will make a final determination.