

Fostering

Reviews and Meetings

The Trust Board has granted the Chief Executive of the Sandwell Children's Trust the authority to approve this document.

Reviews and Meetings

Regulations and Standards

The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011

[Regulation 11 - Independent fostering agencies—duty to secure welfare](#)

Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards

[STANDARD 1 - The child's wishes and feelings and the views of those significant to them](#)

[The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations - Volume 2: care planning, placement and case review, \(June 2015\)](#)

Scope of this Chapter

This chapter explains how the fostering agency contributes to the reviewing of the child's Placement Plan and Care Plan as well as the arrangements for Disruption Meetings.

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1. Placement Plan Reviews

Each child placed with foster carers must have a placement plan, detailing the arrangements and care for the placement of the child.

This should be drawn up by the child's social worker in conjunction with the foster carer and their supervising social worker, at the pre-placement planning meeting. Where the placement is made in an emergency, the placement plan should be drawn up within 5 working days of the placement - see Placements with Foster Carers Procedure.

The placement plan will be reviewed at the child's looked after review.

Where it is necessary to review the placement arrangements between looked after reviews, then this can be done by the child's social worker in conjunction with the foster carer and their supervising social worker as well as with the child, parents and others affected. This will usually take place at a placement plan review meeting convened by the child's social worker.

If the outcome of any review is that the placement plan is amended, then the amendment should be circulated by the child's social worker to all those participating in the review process.

2. Looked After Reviews

Looked after reviews, sometimes called 'statutory reviews', are convened and conducted by Sandwell Childrens Trust. Looked after reviews should normally be conducted at a meeting although this may not be required in respect of a child who has been in a designated long-term foster placement for over twelve months - [The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations - Volume 2: care planning, placement and case review, \(June 2015\)](#). The fostering agency will play their part in these reviews through the foster carers and/or the supervising social workers by providing information and, if appropriate to do so under the Trust's procedures, attending the meetings.

They are formal meetings, chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). The IRO must be satisfied that the wishes and feelings of the child's parents, any person who is not a parent but who has parental responsibility and the current foster carer have been taken into account as part of the review process.

The purpose of the looked after review is to:

- Ensure that appropriate plans are in place to safeguard and promote the overall welfare of the looked after child in the most effective way and achieve permanence for him or her within a timescale that meets his or her needs;
- To monitor the progress of the plans and ensure they are being progressed effectively;
- To make decisions, as necessary, for amendments to those plans to reflect any change in knowledge and/or circumstances;
- For a young person living in foster care, the first looked after review following his or her 16th birthday should consider whether a Staying Put arrangement (whereby the young person remains in the foster home after the age of 18) should be an option.

The review should also take account of the child's placement plan and any other plans or strategies (e.g. behaviour management) ensuring that they are up to date or that arrangements are in place to update them.

Looked after reviews should normally be convened at the following intervals:

- The initial looked after review should be conducted within 20 working days of the child becoming looked after;
- The second looked after review should be conducted within three months of the initial looked after review;
- Subsequent looked after reviews should be conducted not more than six months after any previous review.

Looked after review should also be convened:

As soon as practicable where a child is moved from one placement to another on an unplanned basis or a significant change in the circumstances of a child suggests his/her placement is no longer appropriate.

- Where the child is, or has been, persistently absent from the placement;
- Where the placement provider, parents or area authority are concerned that the child is at risk of harm;
- Where the child so requests, unless the independent reviewing officer considers that the review is not justified;
- Where a significant change to the child's care plan is required;
- Where the independent reviewing officer requests that such a review should be convened, for example, upon the request of the child, parent(s) or any other significant person;
- Where, as a result of a visit, the social worker's assessment is that the child's welfare is not being adequately safeguarded and promoted;
- Where the Trust is proposing to cease to provide accommodation for the child.

If looked after reviews are not arranged or conducted as set out above, the supervising social worker will initially raise concerns with the child's social worker. If matters are not resolved, s/he will contact the child's independent reviewing officer.

2.1 Preparation for the Review

Discussion should take place at least 20 days before the review between the child's social worker and the child regarding where the meeting should be held and who should attend. It is the child's social worker's responsibility to ensure that invitations and papers are sent to those involved in the review at least 10 days before the meeting takes place.

When arrangements are made to conduct a looked after review, the supervising social worker should collaborate with the child's carer(s) and arrange for a full report to be devised and forwarded to the child's social worker in time for them to circulate documentation 10 days prior to the review date. The report should detail events surrounding the child's care, education, health etc. since the last review. The report will be forwarded to those attending prior to the date of the meeting.

There is a presumption that the child will attend the review. A child's disability must not be a bar to the child's attendance.

If the child does not wish to attend they should be encouraged to complete a review questionnaire or prepare their own report/letter/contribution for the review.

If it appears to be necessary or the child requests it, an advocate or, if appointed, an independent visitor should be asked to accompany the child to the review.

The IRO may adjourn a review meeting once, for not more than 20 working days, if not satisfied that sufficient information has been provided by the local authority to enable proper consideration of any of the factors to be considered. The IRO should consider the effects on the child of delaying the meeting, and seek the wishes and feelings of the child, carer and parents where appropriate. No proposal under consideration at the review can be implemented until the review has been completed.

2.2 Record of Reviews

Following the review:

- The IRO should produce a written record of the decisions or recommendations made within five working days of the completion of the review and a full record of the review within 15 working days of the completion of the review;
- The full written record of the review, including the decisions, should be distributed within 20 working days of the completion of the review;
- Within 10 working days, following the completion of the review, the social worker should update the care plan in relation to any changes agreed at the review.

3. The Role of the Independent Reviewing Officer

Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) should be allocated to a child for the duration of the time that they are looked after. Siblings should share the same IRO.

Before the first review the IRO should meet the child and arrange to meet the child as appropriate in advance of subsequent looked after reviews.

As well as the role of chairing looked after reviews, the IRO has a duty to have effective and independent oversight of a child's case which they should monitor. The child's social worker should provide the IRO with information about the child's progress and any significant events.

As part of the monitoring function, the IRO also has a duty to identify any areas of poor practice, including general concerns around service delivery (not just around individual children).

- The responsibilities of the IRO include:
- A responsibility to consult the child about his/her care plan at each review and at any time that there is a significant change to the careplan;
- Ensuring that care plans for looked after children are based on a detailed and informed assessment, up to date, effective and provide a real response to each child's needs;
- Identifying any gaps in the assessment process or delivery of service;
- Offering a safeguard to prevent any 'drift' in care planning and the delivery of services;

- Monitoring the activity of the local authority: that care plans have given proper consideration and weight to the child's current views, wishes and feelings and that he/she fully understands the implications of any changes to their care plan; and
- Ensuring that, having regard to age and understanding, the child has been informed of the steps he/she may take under the Children Act 1989, and in particular, where appropriate, of:
 - The right to apply, with leave, for a Section 8 Order/discharge of a Care Order - if the child wishes to take legal proceedings under the Children Act 1989, the IRO must establish whether an appropriate adult is able and willing to assist the child to obtain legal advice or bring proceedings on his/her behalf, and, if there is no such person, assist the child to obtain such advice;
 - The right to access representations/complaints procedures
- Making sure that the child understands how an advocate could help and his or her entitlement to one.

The IRO has the authority to refer a case to CAFCASS if he/she 'considers it appropriate to do so'.

The IRO must consider whether it is appropriate to refer a case to CAFCASS if:

- In his/her opinion, the local authority / fostering agency has failed in any significant respect to prepare the child's care plan; review the child's case or effectively implement any decision in consequence of a review; or are otherwise in breach of their duties to the child in any material respect; and
- Having drawn this to the attention of persons of appropriate seniority in the fostering agency / local authority, the issues have not been addressed to the IRO's satisfaction within a reasonable period of time.