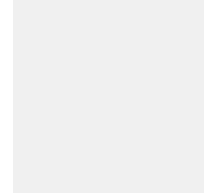


Out of Area Placements



RELATED CHAPTER

The Sufficiency Duty in relation to Accommodation for Looked After Children

Note that different provisions apply to children who acquire Looked After status as a result of a remand to local authority accommodation or **Youth Detention Accommodation**. In relation to those children, please see **Remands to Local Authority Accommodation or to Youth Detention Accommodation Procedure, Care Planning for Young People on Remand or Youth Detention Accommodation**.

RELATED GUIDANCE

[The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations - Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review \(2015\)](#)

[Children's Homes Regulations 2015](#)

[Promoting the health and well-being of looked-after children](#)

AMENDMENT

This chapter was updated in August 2015 in relation to Placements at a Distance, in line with the Children's Homes regulations 2015 and the above statutory guidance.

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1. Background Information

In January 2014 amendments to the Care planning, Placements and Case Review (England) regulations 2010 came into force, introducing requirements for local authorities to consult and share information before placing children in **distant placements** and for the Director of Children's Services (DCS) to give approval of these placements.

For clarity and for the purpose of implementing these requirements the following terms apply:

Out of Area Placement – a placement that is located outside of the boundary of the responsible (or placing) authority.

A Distant Placement – an out of area placement that is not within the area of any adjoining local authority to the responsible authority.

Statutory guidance on promoting the health and well-being of looked after children compliments the amendments to the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) 2010 by setting out that health matters should be an integral consideration when considering placement choices for looked after children and young people.

2. Placements to which this Procedure Applies

This procedure applies to any placement of a Looked After child outside the area of the local authority, EXCEPT WHERE the placement is with a **Connected Person**, or a local authority foster carer approved by the placing authority.

3. Placement Process

The decision to place a child **out of area** must be approved by a Nominated Officer ([Appendix 3: Delegated Decision Makers](#)), unless it is a **Placement at a Distance**, (i.e. outside the area of the local authority and not within the area of any adjoining local authority), in which case the approval of the Director of Children's Services is required.

The Nominated Officer/Director of Children's Services must be satisfied of the following when making a decision whether to approve the proposal for an out of area/distant placement:

1. That the child's wishes and feelings have been ascertained and given due consideration;

2. That the placement is the most appropriate placement available for the child and that the placement is consistent with the child's Care Plan;
3. That the child's relatives have been consulted where appropriate;
4. That the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) has been consulted;
5. That the area authority has been notified or, for a Placement at a Distance, the area authority have been consulted and have been provided with a copy of the child's Care Plan (see [Section 4, Placement Considerations](#)).

4. Placement Considerations

In assessing the suitability of an **out of authority** placement, consideration should be given to the arrangements which will need to be put in place to enable the child to access services such as education and primary and secondary health care. Where the child will require specialist health services such as CAMHS, the Clinical Commissioning Group (or the local health board in Wales) that commissions secondary healthcare in the area authority should be consulted, to establish whether the placement is appropriate and able to meet the child's needs. The child or young person's SDQ score should also help to inform decision making.

The designated nurse for looked-after children in the area authority will also be a valuable source of advice and information. Similarly, the Virtual School Head for looked-after children in the area authority, (Looked After Children Education Co-ordinators (LACE) in Wales) should also be able to advise about access to schools and school support.

For children vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, children's services in the area authority will be an important source of intelligence and information about local arrangements for safeguarding children.

Where the placement under consideration is in a children's home, account should be taken of the information in the home's Statement of Purpose and its location assessment. The location assessment should include details of the home's safeguarding arrangements, including any measures taken by the home to manage safeguarding concerns arising from the neighbourhood where the home is located.

Whilst there should be robust and effective care planning for all placements, given the inherent vulnerabilities associated with living far from home, **placements at a distance** will require effective planning, engagement and information sharing with the services likely to be responsible for meeting the child's needs in the future. **Consultation** with the area authority prior to placement must (except in an emergency) be undertaken with sufficient time to enable a thorough assessment of the appropriateness of the placement to be made.

[Appendix 1: Suggested Information for Discussion between Authorities when Planning Distant Placements](#) suggests information that might be discussed with the area authority when planning a distant placement.

[Click here to view Local Authority contact details.](#)

5. Emergency Placements

In the case of a placement made in an emergency, the approval of the Nominated Officer/Director of Children's Services is still required and s/he must be satisfied that the child's wishes and feelings have been ascertained and given due consideration and that the placement is the most appropriate placement available consistent with the Care Plan. Within 5 working days the IRO must be informed; relatives be consulted (where appropriate) and the area authority notified.

6. Notification of Placements

Written notification must be given to the area authority of the arrangements for the placement before the placement is made or, if the placement is made in an emergency, within five working days of the start of the placement unless it is not reasonably practicable to do so.

In Walsall these notifications are made via the Safeguarding and Reviewing Service and the following is the suggested items of information items to be shared as part of notification of new, changed or ceased LAC placement out of area:

- Child's full name and AKA;
- Date of Birth;
- Gender;
- Placing Authority;
- Social Worker name and contact details (particularly phone, email);
- Emergency details for home authority;
- IRO details;
- Legal status;
- Whether this is notification of a new placement, a change or end of placement;
- Date placement started or date due to change or end;
- Carer / institution type (foster carer, children's home or other);
- What the carer has been contracted to provide, if specialist, for example;
- Carer contact details including address;
- Particular needs or risks to the child such as SEN, disability, youth offending, mental health needs etc – a copy of the care plan should be shared to highlight needs;
- School name and address (old and planned new school if known);
- GP details (old and/or new if known).

The [Association of Directors of Children's Services](#) has collated secure email addresses for each host Local Authority.

7. Placements in Wales

For placements in Wales, the Welsh Government has developed a protocol for notifying the local authority and the local health board when a child has been placed there from outside the area, and again when the placement ends. This protocol is attached at [Appendix 2: Welsh Model Out of Area Notification Protocol](#).

Appendix 1: Suggested Information for Discussion between Authorities when Planning Distant Placements

Basic information about the child

- Name and date of birth;
- Legal status (subject of a care order (s.31 Children Act); voluntarily accommodated (s.20) remanded (s. 21);
- Number of previous placements – outline reasons for child leaving earlier placements.

Plans for the child's care

- Details of the assessment of the child's needs, with information about the child's wishes and feelings, with reasons the planned placement is suitable;
- Duration of placement (emergency/short-term/long-term/permanent). If it is not possible to assess the intended duration of placement – reasons for this and when this information will be available;
- Arrangements for contact;
- Details of who will be responsible for implementing plans for the child's day to day care (the 'placement plan') including details of arrangements for delegating responsibilities to the child's carer(s);
- Details of any plans to offer the child care leaving support (as an 'eligible child') during the anticipated duration of the placement;
- Contingency arrangements if the plan to support the child in the current placement does not succeed.

Services to support the child

- Details of plans to meet the child's educational needs – information about the school the child is expected to attend; details of plans for supporting the child if a school has not been identified;

- Information about plans to meet the child’s health needs, e.g. whether the child requires secondary health care (including mental health and other specialist health care), including details about the CCG acting as “responsible commissioner.”
- Details of any youth justice supervision order that would need to be overseen by youth justice services in the area authority.

Local authorities have a common interest in supporting high standards of corporate parenting for all looked-after children.

When approached for consultation about potential placements, area authorities should be able to offer a professional view about the benefits of a planned placement, the benefits of living in the neighbourhood where the placement is located and the potential for local services to respond appropriately to the needs of the child concerned.

Local authorities could also advise about other sources of information to assist social workers and commissioners in determining whether a distant out of authority placement is the most appropriate for the child concerned (e.g. the Virtual School Head or the Designated Nurse for looked-after children).

Appendix 2: Welsh Model Out of Area Notification Protocol

(This protocol was developed by the Welsh Government in conjunction with the children’s residential care sector in Wales).

Where a child who is looked-after is placed at distance the responsible authority has a statutory duty to notify the local authority and the health care provider, in the area in which the child is to be placed, of the arrangements for placement prior to placement and no later than 10 days thereafter.

Similarly, where a child is provided with accommodation by any Local Health Board, Special Health Authority, Clinical Commissioning Group, NHS Trust or by a local authority in exercise of education functions for three months or more or with the intention of the placement lasting for this time the Accommodating Authority has a duty to notify the appropriate officer of the responsible authority.

Where a child is provided with accommodation in any care home or independent hospital for three months or more or with the intention of the placement lasting for this time the residential setting has a statutory duty to notify the lead Director of Social Services in the area in which the establishment is situated.

Notification should be sent to the Director of Social Services in the local authority in which the home is situated.

See the Out of Area Notification Protocol Form for use by children’s homes in Wales* in the Practice Guidance Section

* This information has been reproduced from the Department for Education publication: Out of authority placement of looked-after children Supplement to The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations - Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review.

Appendix 3: Delegated Decision Makers

Distant Placements:

David Haley

Director of Children's Services

Room 39, 2nd Floor, Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall, WS1 1TW

Email: David.Hayley@walsall.gov.uk

Tel No: 01922 652081

Where the Director of Children's Services is on leave delegated Authority is given to the nominated Officers for Out of Area Placements to give permission and for the Director of Children's services to be briefed on their return.

Out of Area Placements:

Debbie Carter

Assistant Director, Social Care

Children's Services

Room 41, 2nd Floor, Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall, WS1 1TP

Email: Debbie.Carter@walsall.gov.uk

Tel No: 01922 652756

Mob: 07875144552

Carol Boughton

Head of Service - Safeguarding and Quality Assurance

Walsall Children's Services, Children's Specialist Services

Walsall Council, Zone 2F, 2nd Floor, Civic Centre, Darwall Street, Walsall, WS1 1TP

Email: Carol.Boughton@walsall.gov.uk

Tel No: 01922 655848

Mob: 07944 280045

Lisa Harris

Principal Social Worker

Children's Services

2nd Floor, Zone 2D, Civic Centre, Lichfield Street, Walsall, WS1 1TP

Email: Lisa.Harris@walsall.gov.uk

Tel No: 01922 653779

Mob: 07961474726

In the unlikely event that none of the nominated officers for Out of Area placements are available delegated Authority is given to Group Managers, Children's Specialist Services to give permission which should be followed by a briefing to a nominated officer.