



Wandsworth Care Panel: Terms of reference

When family relationships breakdown or circumstances are concerning, it may be necessary for children to become 'looked after' by the local authority to ensure they are safe and protected.

A decision to take a child into care must be carefully considered. Key factors such as risk, health and harm need to be examined holistically before a decision to provide statutory care is made. This is because evidence demonstrates that longer term outcomes (including education, health and employability) for children who do not remain at home (taken into care), are usually poor.

Children will only come into the care of Wandsworth when it is **absolutely necessary**. If children do come into care, their accommodation and support needs will be met holistically and regularly reviewed so they can develop and thrive. Decisions about bringing children into care are so important that the most senior person in the organisation must have oversight. This critical decision-making process is undertaken by the Children's Services Care Panel.

1. Panel objectives and purpose

- 1.1 To provide scrutiny and oversight of decisions for children coming into the care of the authority. This includes endorsing the use of resources to create a 'hub' of support around a young person to maintain them in their family home, reunify them with their family or support stability in their placement setting¹. The panel also has responsibility for decision making on changes in placement which are considered unstable or disrupted.
- 1.2 The panel must also consider the cost(s) likely to be incurred by each placement. It will seek to ensure that individual placements meet the needs of the child / young person and provide value for money.
- 1.3 The panel will:

Ensure that an appropriate placement is identified based on the needs of the child using information provided as part of assessment and care plans	Consider the wishes and voices of children in placement decisions	Identify, agree, and implement additional support interventions to achieve independence and permanence where required.	Agree a bespoke combination of resources as a 'hub' around a young person, to prevent entry into care, to support reunification or improve placement stability.
Conduct periodic reviews of placements to ensure that needs are effectively met. This includes regular review of high cost placements and 'hubs' of support.	Provide a practice focussed arena with senior managers demonstrating cohesive ownership and leadership	Offer support and challenge to practice decisions	Note decisions about issuing of legal proceedings, based on the recommendation of a Legal Planning Meeting.

¹ Including placements with connected persons, foster care, residential children's homes, secure accommodation, parent and child placements, semi-independent provision, placements for children and young people with disabilities, specialist provision and all other settings.

2. Membership and governance

- 2.1 The panel will be chaired by the Deputy Director for children's services and has a dedicated administrator to manage the coordination and prioritisation of children as well as record decisions in the child / young person's electronic record. Recording must be within three working days.
- 2.2 Attendance at Panel is **mandatory** for the social worker and team manager making the request. Further guidance can be found in appendix 1.

Required Panel Members

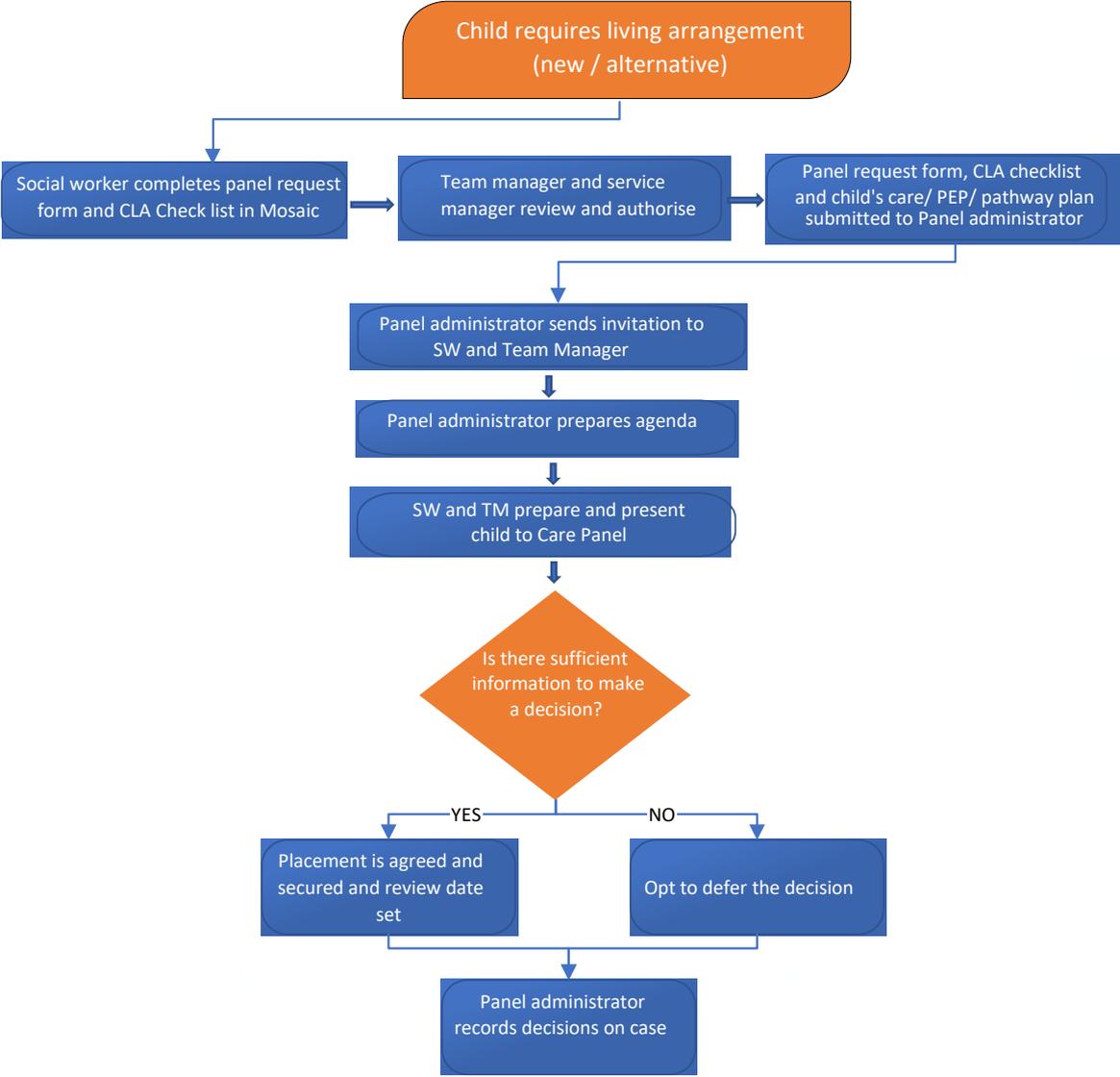
- Deputy Director for Children's services- Chair
- Head of Service – Children Looked After- Vice Chair
- Head of Service – Family Safeguarding and Supporting Disabled Children's Service
- Head of Clinical Services and Specialist Services for Families
- Head of Finance
- Placements Manager
- Head Teacher Wandsworth Virtual School
- Manager representing Fostering Service
- Manager representing Care Leaving Service
- Manager representing Independent Reviewing Service
- Manager representing Early Help Services
- Manager representing CAMHS Social Care
- Manager representing Edge of Care
- Representative from Performance Team
- Panel administrator

Adhoc Members

- SNAS officer when the child has an EHCP and assessment is indicating the requirement for joint funding with SEND
- Designated Clinical Officer when the child has an EHCP and assessment is indicating the requirement for joint funding with SEND
- As required Service Managers with responsibility for; Admission into Care, Care Proceedings, Permanence, Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) and Care Leavers.

- 2.3 Meetings are weekly and held on Wednesday afternoons.
- 2.4 The child's social worker must complete the Panel Request Form in the Mosaic Workflow. This requires the authorisation of the relevant Service Manager. Requests must be received by the panel administrator with appropriate authorisation no later than two working days prior to the panel meeting (i.e., Monday afternoon).
- 2.5 The panel does not have a supervisory function although both inadequate and excellent practice will be brought to the attention of the appropriate Head of Service by the panel chair.
- 2.6 The role, effectiveness, and processes of Wandsworth's Care Panel are reviewed annually by the Deputy Director together with the Chairs and Members, inclusive of views of staff about the effectiveness of the Panel and their experiences of coming to the Panel.

3. Panel Presentation Protocol



3.1 In exceptional circumstances a decision may need to be made about the placement of a child or young person before the circumstances can be presented to the panel. For these children, the decision to commit a prevention of care resource or for the child to come into care will be agreed by the relevant Head of Service and considered at the next meeting of the panel retrospectively.

3.2 Children may be presented to the panel for information when there is a significant likelihood that they may require a planned resource at some point in the future.

3.3 Parents, carers, children and young people will not be involved in the panel process. Should a disagreement arise out of the plans agreed by the panel, then it should be managed through existing routes - e.g., Care Plan

4. Finance and budget

- 4.1 The Panel will take into account the cost(s) likely to be incurred by each placement. It will seek to ensure that individual placements meet the needs of the child / young person and provide value for money.
- 4.2 Placements and packages requiring joint funding with the care service must be attended by the Designated Clinical Officer from Health and the SNAS officer. Health and SNAS will liaise with the relevant Head of Service and the child's social worker to submit a referral to the panel as per the process outlined in point 3.
- 4.3 Placements and packages requiring joint funding arrangements with Health must also be submitted to the Health Panel of the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). The decision of the CARE PANEL for funding of the child's care needs should be given in advance of the funding request to the Health Panel by the Social Worker/ Service Manager attending. **The funding decision of one Panel does not predetermine the funding agreement of another.** The shared assessment of need and recommendations and the discussion at the CARE PANEL attended by the Designated Clinical Officer will support and inform the presentation to the Health Panel by the Service Manager.
- 4.4 The Health Panel meets monthly. For the general guidance of children's services staff, referrals should usually be made to the Health Panel of the Clinical Commissioning Group, NHS South West London, when:
 - The provider and cost of the proposed treatment/assessment are known
 - There has been a joint assessment of needs with health professionals
 - The child has been assessed for children's continuing care
 - The service manager has authorised the referral and agreed the Proforma information provides good evidence for the funding requestThe WARHCP has agreed the funding for the child's assessed care needs
- 4.5 Each panel decision will be reflected in the appropriate budget projections.