

Placement and Resource Panel PRP Policy for Tri-x

What is the Purpose of the Placement and Resource Panel (PRP)?

This guidance sets out:

- the referral process for all placement requests,
- the appropriate method of seeking management approval for a placement, change to a placement or continued financial support for a placement, and
- the completion and submission of the panel referral form.

The Placement and Resource Panel (PRP) is the decision-making panel who approves all placement requests for children and young people. A placement is where a child / young person lives within a foster family, children's home, supported living arrangement or university. It also includes children and young people who may spend a period in an unregulated or bridging placement.

The panel are not responsible for making the entry to care decision, however they will advise and where needed, challenge the actions taken to prevent a child becoming looked after, the actions taken or planned which look to support a child / young person to return to their family, where it is safe to do so or where there is a plan of permanence.

The Panel is complementary to, and not a replacement for, care planning meetings. Care planning arrangements should advise and make recommendation on how the child / young person's needs are best met; in accordance with the care plan and how the child's needs can be met; however, it cannot agree the placement type or funding however, placement provision and funding is decided by the PRP members.

The Panel will provide both a structured process and effective guidance to social workers and other staff to ensure that the plan for the child to be looked after away from home is in the child's best interest by:

- Providing a consistent support or challenge to all placement requests.
- Ensuring that all appropriate options to keep the child or young person with their family, wherever it is safe to do so have been fully explored prior to them coming into care.
- Ensuring where a child or young person has come into care that we are regularly reviewing whether they can safely return to their families.
- Ensuring placements are commissioned and reviewed within a best value framework to meet the needs of the children and young people in their care.
- Monitor and review placement moves and take any learning from this to improve future service delivery.
- Ensuring progression to High Cost Placement Panel (determining split funding arrangements where appropriate);
- Maintaining management oversight of budget pressures and demand.

- Collecting and collating management information which informs the Councils overall Sufficiency Strategy and will help to identify gaps in service provision available. The Sufficiency Strategy is the Councils overall plan for how it will meet the placement needs of our Children Looked After and Care Leavers.
- Review existing residential placements ensuring where young people are placed at a distance this remains the right placement for them and to consider opportunities (alongside care teams) to move children and young people back to local placements when this is in their best interests.
- Review existing residential placement to ensure any movement is planned to reduce vacancies and maximise in house and local resources.
- Ensure a strong link between the work of the MACC, High Cost Panel and all other forums where placements are considered.
- Review placements at risk of breakdown, to prevent unnecessary moves for children, ensuring that all options have been explored which will help to maintain a placement (when it is in the best interests to do so) and to retain oversight of alternative placement finding activity.
- Oversight of residential placement searches, progress and barriers and for any other externally commissioning placement for looked after children.
- Oversight to ensure the effective use of other in-house resources such as fostering and supported lodging provision.
- Consider and agree permanency planning in relation to external foster placements.
- Ensure the links between the PRP and EDT are effective in supporting children and young people who present in crisis outside of office hours.

Membership

Membership is made up of, but not exclusive to the following roles:

- Chair: Strategic Manager: Children Looked After Resources
- Vice Chair: Strategic Manager: Children Looked After or Strategic Manager: Families First
- Panel Members:
 - Team Manager or Consultant Social Worker for Fostering.
 - Manager for Families First in the absence of the Strategic Manager for Families First.
 - Operations Manager for Children Looked After in the absence of the Strategic Manager for Children Looked After.
 - Manager: Independent Reviewing Officers
 - Commissioning Policy Planning Officer.
 - Virtual School Head.
 - Supporting Solutions Manager.
 - Panel Administrator.

Where members are absent due to annual leave, the panel administrator must be informed, and they will be required to identify deputies to attend in their absence. This will ensure continuity and consistency in panel membership.

The panel will be considered quorate if the chair, vice chair or their representative, at least one other panel member and the administrator is present. A lack of quoracy will result in the panel being stood down and all agenda items deferred to an alternative panel.

The agenda and supporting papers will usually be shared with panel members by noon on the Friday before panel, by the panel administrator. This will give panel members sufficient time to consider all paperwork prior to panel.

The panel administrator is responsible for collating all referrals and ensuring timely and correct receipt of all paperwork, allocating times for social workers to attend panel and the circulate documentation. The decision log is used to ensure all decisions from panel are recorded in one place and provide an audit trail. The log is maintained by the panel administrator and is reviewed at each panel.

What do I refer to PRP?

All placement requests for any child or young person to become looked after must be submitted to the Placement and Resource Panel, EXCEPT for:

- Young people who are remanded into the care of the Local Authority;
- Regulation 24 requests which should be submitted to the designated Strategic Manager in accordance with Placements with Connected Persons; however, if there is an additional cost to support this arrangement such as nursery fee's then a request to PRP for funding is required.
- Where the authority is instigating process under the Public Law Outline (PLO) and the possible outcome is that they may need to become looked after when there is a plan to place with a relative or friend.
- Standalone transport costs, these need to be submitted to the transport clinic.
- Placements costs which are less than £1,000 over a 12-month period and would be met by the social work teams budget, i.e. a one-off payment which supports the placement.

The basic principle is, if there is a cost to the Local Authority associated with the child or young person's care, which is outside of those listed above, then you are required to make a referral to PRP for agreement to fund the cost. This includes requests for:

- Children's homes – either inhouse Durham County Council Homes or Private homes in or outside of the Durham Area.
- Independent Fostering Families (IFA's), this may include nursery costs, bed blocks, solo placement request etc.
- In house fostering requests where there is a cost which exceeds £1,000 in any given 12-month period, this may include nursery costs, bed blocks, solo placement requests etc.

- Parent and child / Parent and Child assessment placements
- Staying Put or Staying Close
- Permanent matches with long term foster carers
- Supported Living Arrangements
- Residential Educational Schools
- Respite (excluding children with a disability whereby the request would be submitted to the validation panel) when external respite is required i.e. with an IFA or a residential home providing respite.
- University Accommodation Costs
- Support for children looked after who are with unregulated family or friends carers.
- Any placement support costs which exceed £1,000 in a 12 month period, including independent therapeutic costs, such as equine therapy, where the need is supported by our Full Circle Service.
- You will also be required to attend PRP if any previous decision has changed and additional costs are requested or there is a reduction in the costs. For example: a provider requires additional staffing for a set period.

The frequency and venue for PRP

The Placement and Resource Panel will meet weekly, usually on a Monday or Tuesday of each week, but not exclusively.

Dates of all panels will be available from the Panel Administrator who will also provide weekly agendas setting out items for discussion each week/allocated time for the case social worker to be available to attend panel should this be required. If the social worker is not available then the Team Manager, Consultant Social Worker or Duty Social must be able to attend on their behalf.

The panels will be held virtually via Teams. There may be occasions where the panel meet face to face however these will be kept to a minimum to reduce travel time for all concerned.

How do I make a referral to PRP?

To make a referral to panel you will need to complete a PRP Referral Form and submit it to PRPpanel@durham.gov.uk usually by mid-day each Thursday. This will ensure your request is considered at panel the following week. Late requests will not be added to the agenda and your request will be tabled for the following week.

The PRP referral form can be obtained by emailing PRPpanel@durham.gov.uk and asking for a copy of the most up to date form to be sent or by getting a copy from the appendices which accompanies this policy.

What do panel need to know?

The Panel Members will consider information provided in the referral form. You must identify which provision you are requesting and indicate whether this is the first request, a review of an existing arrangement or whether you are updating panel following their decision to defer your previous request for additional information.

You need to clearly record why the child / young person is in care, why they can't be with their families and what course of action we are taking as a local authority to ensure they become or remain a child looked after. Why is important! do not cut and paste the assessment into the referral, summarise why and what is happening for the child /young person. An update of any legal proceedings is a helpful addition in this section – especially where it outlines the Local Authorities plan and timescales. You need to include the dates of the Child Looked After Review (CLA), when the 4-month ratifying review is booked for and/or the date of the next planned CLA Review.

You will then need to detail everything which has been done or is being done to avoid the child or young person coming into care and, where it is safe to do so remain with their family. Whilst an entry to care decision may have already been made this does not automatically mean the decision will remain unchallenged by the PRP panel, this will particularly be the case where there is limited evidence of 'enough' being done to ensure the child or young person can safely stay or return to their family. The panel are keen to see the effective use of resources such as Family Group Conferencing, Supporting Solutions, Family Networks, Family Support work, actions undertaken by the child's care team etc.

You will then need to inform the panel about where the child or young person is living now and why they need the provision you have requested. Why this provision and not something else? What will the provision provide that a different provision cannot? What do we expect from them? How will they achieve it? How will we know the child has benefitted from this provision? What impact on quality of care will this have for the child? How we will monitor progress and support a return to the family, through to permanence, into independence, depending upon what the plan is for the child or young person?

The panel will want to understand what the child or young person wants from their care and what their wishes and feelings are about where they will be living (giving their age and understanding). The panel would like to see in the child's words, what they understand about their care plan and how this intervention will improve their quality of care.

All too often PRP referrals are deferred as the financial information is incorrect. The start and end date are for the placement request. Therefore, any request cannot be until the child is 18! Whilst they may remain in care until they are 18 years old, we must review the resource to ensure it remains the right provision for the child or young person's needs as they grow and their needs change. Initially resource reviews are more frequently, i.e. fortnightly, monthly, bi-monthly however where there is permanence agreed or we are working towards permanence a review will be less

frequent but no less than annually. Therefore, all placement requests will be reviewed at panel at least annually, this is usually in the case of where a child or young person is permanently matched with their foster family.

Costs need to be totalled from the start to the end date by which you are requesting agreement for. Equally who is contributing what needs to be broken down too for instance part funded by health or education. Remember the placement may not have changed but the request may be new or for continued financial approval.

What if there has been an unplanned entry into care and a strategic manager has given approval for a placement?

This will happen from time to time and any strategic manager can agree a placement cost as a result of an unplanned entry into care or an unforeseen placement breakdown. This financial decision is valid for only 7 days and must be ratified at the next PRP. It is the social workers responsibility to ensure there is no drift or delay in completing the PRP referral form for this decision.

If you are submitting a referral due to the above and an extension of this arrangement past the 7 days do not submit two separate requests. Submit one referral form to PRP outlining the unplanned entry into care decision identifying which strategic manager made the decision and when plus the request for the continuation of the placement.

Do I have to attend panel?

You must be available to attend panel. You will be given a time slot where panel may dial you in. This usually happens if it is a new request or if any of the panel members have any questions regarding the information on the referral form. There will be times when panel do not dial you into panel, this is usually because all of the information in the referral form is clear, panel have no questions or the members of panel have been actively involved with this case and therefore do not require any additional information or discussion.

If you are not able to attend your Team Manager or Consultant Social Worker will be expected to present on your behalf. It is your responsibility to inform them you are not available and brief them ahead of panel and to inform the panel administrator. If no one is available to attend your request will be deferred.

How do I find out the decision from panel?

If you were not dialled into the panel because the panel did not require any additional information or clarification you will receive an email from PRPpanel@durham.gov.uk or the panel administrator with the decision from panel. The decision from panel will also be recorded on the child / young person's liquidlogic record.

Minutes of the panel are circulated around all team managers, operations managers, strategic managers and panel members. Decisions will also be recorded in the minutes.

The panel's decision will either be to agree the request, decline the request or defer the request for further information. Where the panel have deferred the request, it is either because the referral is missing some key information which the panel members need to make a decision, and or no-one was available to present at panel despite being required to be available to attend or to give the referring social worker time to consider what the panel are requesting.

Following the Panel, the Panel Administrator will: Record panel decisions on panel minutes, the PRP referral reform, the PRP decisions log and directly onto the child's Liquidlogic record.

Review periods

PRP will never indefinitely agree a resource or agree a resource until the child / young person is 18. All placements require a review period. This does not mean the placement type or resource has to change or the child / young person needs to move, it means the resource must be reviewed to ensure it is still meeting the child or young person's needs, it continues to be the right resource, we have explored whether the child or young person can return to their family and whether the cost of the provision is still in line with what the child or young person needs. Initially reviews are more frequently, i.e. fortnightly, monthly, bi-monthly however where there is permanence agreed or we are working towards permanence a review will be less frequent but no less than annually. Therefore, all placement requests will be reviewed at panel at least annually.

PRP will consider the social workers recommendations on a review period (usually documented in the referral form where the end date is captured) however the panel will be clear in their decision making about when they expect to see the request back at panel. This will consider key decision-making point such as the CLA Review and court.

Progression to High Cost Panel

Where your request exceeds costs of £26,000 in any given 12-month period, the request is for external residential or where there is joint funding required (health and/or education) you will be required to submit a second request for funding support from the High Cost Panel.

PRP can only agree the local authorities' contribution. Funding for the resource will not be ratified until the request has been approved at High Cost Panel.

Details on how to submit a request to the High Cost Panel are available on Trix or alternatively you can email HighCostComplexPanel@durham.gov.uk with your query.