

Terms of Reference for Placement and Resource Panel (PRP)

Revised December 2020

Background

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, university or when a child or young person spends a period of time in an unregistered 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; however, it cannot agree the placement type or funding. That is the role of PRP.

The budget associated with this work is significant. The challenge to manage provision of services within the allocated budget is challenging due to an increase in the demand for placement provision.

Our ambition

To ensure robust decisions regarding good quality and a range of suitable provisions for children looked after are considered alongside the child or young person's needs, against a backdrop of financial scrutiny and accountability of resources on behalf of Children and Young People's Service, Durham County Council.

Purpose

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 consistent support or challenge to all placement requests.
- Ensuring that all appropriate options to keep the child or young person with their family, where 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.
- 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 any 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 placements 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, ensure 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 supported lodging provision.
- Consider and agree permanency planning in relation to independent foster families.
- 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.
 - 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.

We will continually encourage new and existing staff to attend panel and observe as part of their ongoing development and learning.

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 a clear audit trail. The log is maintained by the panel administrator and is reviewed at each panel.

Frequency of meetings

Weekly

Accountability

All decisions will be recorded on a decision log which will be made available to all panel members as part of the panel papers.

The Placement and Resource Panel are accountable to the Head of Children's Service and the High Cost Panel.

The spend associated with placements is governed by Durham County Council's financial monitoring processes.