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# **1 Aim of Access to Resource Panel**

1.1 Our Access to Resources Panel aims to promote consistency of practice, decision making and value for money across Dudley MBC.

1.2 This forms part of our approach in ensuring the effective planning, use of family and friends carers, local authority foster placements, monitoring, evaluation and value for money of placements and services provided to Children in Care, children on the edge of care and Children in Need in our community. It supports the detailed work undertaken with our partners through our Tripartite arrangements and through our high cost placement oversight

1.3 The intention is to co-ordinate the range of activity across Children’s Services, including a clear focus on supporting families to stay together wherever it is safe to do so, thus minimising the need for children to become looked after, or supporting their timely return to their families, as well as making good quality placements if children do need to be looked after.

# **2 Principles of our decision making**

2.1 The Panel will consider information provided, and the following principles of good childcare practice standards underpin its decisions:

* Promotion of high standards of childcare practice
* Decisions are based on identified needs and best interests of the child
* Ensuring the child is safe, that decisions promote and safeguard their welfare and are timely, relevant to their age and development
* Clear focus on supporting families to stay together wherever it is safe to do so
* Robust and effective decision-making ensuring children have the best opportunity of experiencing permanency
* Giving due consideration to the child or young person wishes and feeling with due regard to their age and understanding.
* Giving due consideration to the child or young person’s race, religion/belief, gender, culture and linguistic backgrounds, disability and sexual orientation.
* Determining whether parents/carers’ wishes and feelings have been ascertained and that they are willing or actively engaged in using treatment or support resources offered to resolve identified concerns/issues
* Clarity of planning which includes specifying actions to be taken by all parties concerned, to avoid the need for the child to become looked after, where safe to do so
* Effective use of all resources in the child’s network, both professional and family based
* Targeting resources where they can most effectively assist families, and enable children and young people to remain within families or with carers in their local communities
* Monitoring interventions to promote early success and good outcomes for the child or young person

1. **Focus for the Panel**
2. To consider placements outside of those provided by the Authority, or additional costs where these are identified
3. Agree specific resources or types of placement that will meet the plan for the child in both the short and long term, and commit resources from the following budgets:
   1. Consider financial assessments and potential allowances for prospective adopters and special guardians
   2. Additional transport costs associated with the placement
   3. Supervised contact costs outside of the service contract

iii) To authorise Section 17 spend with a greater total commitment of £500

iv) To review NRPF arrangements in line with the Authority’s policy (12 weekly) and with a focus on the timely decision making for the child

v) To advise on alternative intervention strategies to prevent children being accommodated unnecessarily and ensure all other means of supporting the child/family have been fully explored e.g. universal services, family support services and family group conferencing etc

vi) Agree funding for specialist assessments including as part of the Public Law Outline (PLO) where the cost is anticipated to exceed £1,000. It is not expected that the Local Authority will cover costs above the nationally agreed rates.

# **4 Membership of Panel**

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| **Member** | **Roles and responsibilities** |
| **Chair**  Head of Service | To chair meetings and facilitate participation in discussion, constructive challenge and decision making  Agree the recommendations and action plan proposed by the meeting  Provide expert knowledge of childcare planning and local resources  Provide support in managing risk |
| Panel administrator | Put in place an effective booking system for panels  Receive and collate referrals, and plan agenda  Minute meeting and record panel decisions  Disseminate paperwork to all panel members  Record review dates and agenda in relevant panel meetings  Input panel decisions on LCS |
| Family Solutions Service Manager lead | Offer advice on what support can be offered to a child or young person on the edge of care, or where rehabilitation home is the plan including offer through FGC and through CART |
| Placements lead | Advise on placements which are available in-house  Ability of carer to meet transport and supervised contact arrangements  Work with social workers/teams to access in-house placement services  Advise panel on other options which are available |
| Virtual School Head | To support with expertise in education planning and progress allocation of pupil premium as appropriate |
| Commissioning Lead | To support robust contract management oversight  Take back needs information to inform ongoing fostering recruitment strategy and wider commissioning framework |
| Presenting worker and Team Manager | The ARP referral will be approved and signed off by the Team Manager and Service Manager.  The **Team Manager** must ensure:  The referral to panel is fit for purpose, and meets the panel remit  A clear summary of the case and what panel is being asked to agree  Any decision regarding potential carers allowance (Adoption or Special Guardianship) is in line with policy and legislation |

In accordance the Council's Code of Conduct, all officers will be required to declare any personal interests or potential conflicts, or relationships with external contractors and any person or company where a conflict may be present.

Conflicts of interest will be a standard item on the Access to Resource Panel agenda. Access to Resource Panel members will not be involved in placement decisions or discussions if they have an interest with a placement that is presented for approval.

# **5 Children in need of partner support: shared funding**

5.1 Where there is a role to consider joint or tri-partite funding in order to meet a child’s needs, this will be directed to the Tripartite group. This will be a commissioning led, joint planning arena; the membership will reflect this accordingly.

5.2 Membership arrangements:

* **Chair:** To rotate through the three key agencies (Health, children’s social care, Educ. via SEND)
* Head of Service, Children’s Resources
* Dudley Integrated health and care NHS trust
* Head of Service, SEND
* Head of Service, DDS
* Lead commissioner for children’s services

5.3 Presentation of papers will not require attendance of the agency front line workers

**Date: July 2021**