

The Somerset Children's Services Practice Standards

Head of Service – Quality Assurance

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This document should be used to help staff understand the expectations around how we all work with families. It should be used together with other policy and guidance that is held on Tri X and in South West Child Protection Procedures.

Note on language: Whilst it is appreciated that some adolescents may prefer the term young person, for consistency and clarity, within this document the words child/children are used to indicate those under the age of 18. The terms young person/young people are intended to mean those aged 18-25. The word family is intended to include foster families.

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Section 1: How we work with children, young people and their families

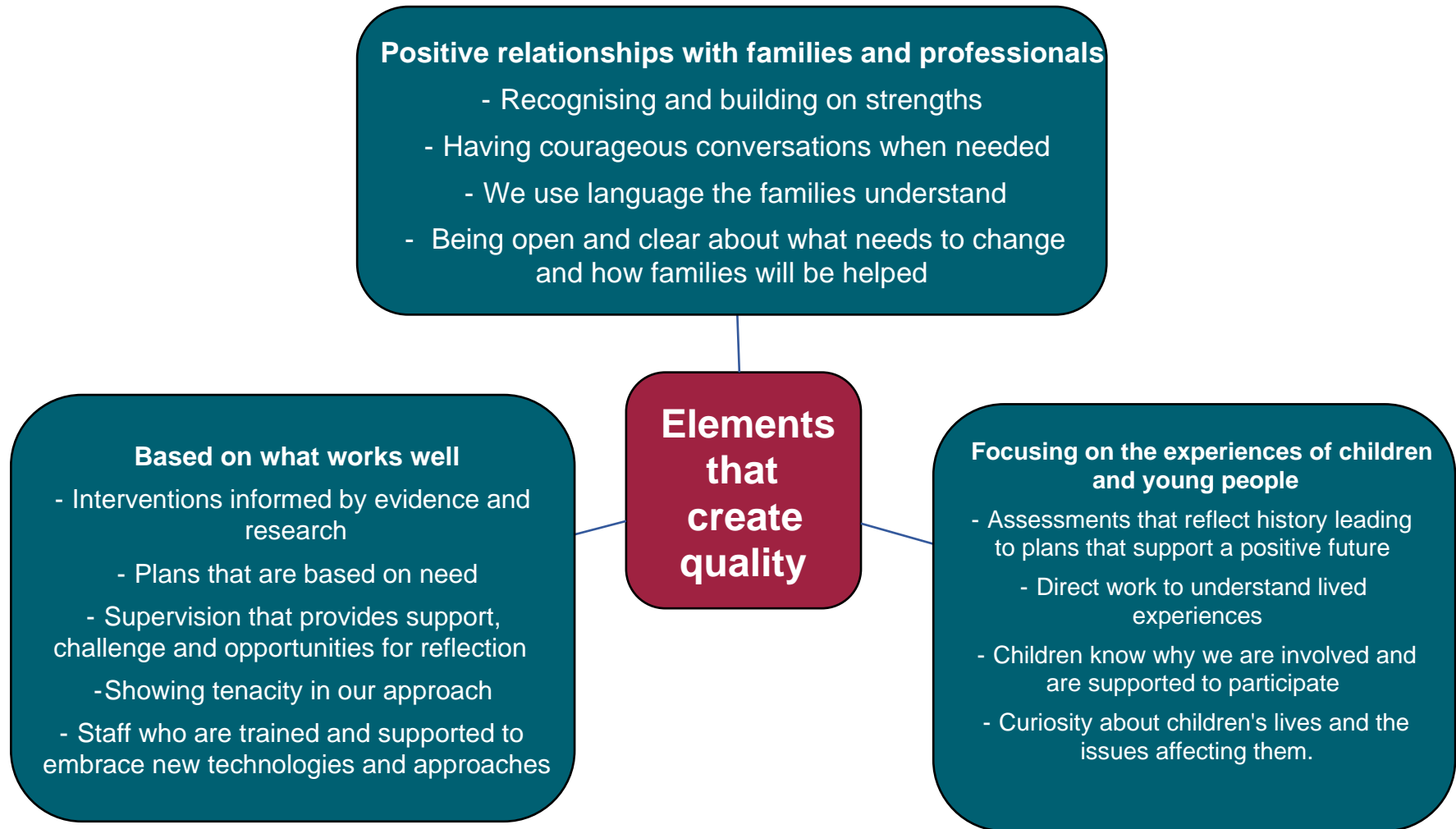
a) The overall approach

- 1.1 We treat everyone with respect, celebrate diversity and promote individuality. We take account of the impact that our behaviour and presentation has on families, professionals and each other.
- 1.2 We always seek consent for our involvement, unless it would place the child at additional risk. If there are times where families do not agree to work with us, and we are still concerned about the safety of their child or young person, we will be open and honest about any continued involvement and work in partnership wherever possible.
- 1.3 Our communication and recording will be clear and we will use straightforward language. We will take account of any additional communication needs people have and make it as easy as possible for them to give their views.
- 1.4 We make sure that families understand:
 - Why we are involved in their lives
 - Why we share information about them and with whom
 - How to contact their worker and their worker's manager
 - The strengths and worries that have been identified
 - What needs to happen to improve the child's situation
- 1.5 Children and young people will be at the centre of all planning. We will take account of their history and be aspirational for their future.
- 1.6 We use our time purposefully by planning our work and making our contact with families and colleagues meaningful.
- 1.7 Families' opinions are valued, heard and recorded, even when we do not agree.
- 1.8 Children and young people's views and experiences will be presented within meetings and reflected in key reports. This will be achieved using communication methods appropriate to the child's needs and ability and may include any or all of the following:

- Using direct work to understand their voice and experience
 - Supporting children/ young people to attend meetings wherever appropriate
 - Offering an Advocate
 - Using tools such as Mind of My Own
- 1.9 We work with partner agencies to develop plans for families. Where we cannot agree on plans for children, we will follow the Resolving Professional Differences Procedure. When the Independent Reviewing Officer or Child Protection Coordinator identifies issues that need resolving then they will discuss these with the relevant professional and use the Resolving Professional Differences Procedure or Issue Resolution Process if necessary.
- 1.10 Involvement with children, young people and their families will be proportionate to the level of need and risk identified. Judgements about risk will be balanced and evidence based.
- 1.11 We will learn from feedback from children, professionals and families to improve the way we work. For any formal complaints, we will follow the Corporate complaints procedure. We will always seek to resolve issues at the earliest opportunity wherever possible.
- 1.12 We speak openly about our challenges, offer help and support to one another to do the best job we can.
- 1.13 As an organisation and individuals, we will make sure that all staff and foster carers have a comprehensive induction and ongoing learning opportunities to ensure that everyone is fully equipped to do their job.
- 1.14 We will make sure that all staff receive regular high quality supervision appropriate to their role and needs, as outlined in the Supervision Policy.
- 1.15 We will promote a learning culture where success is celebrated, and we learn from what works well.
- 1.16 We will understand our role within Somerset County Council and how the organisation impacts on the work we do.
- 1.17 We will make sure that all information recorded about families is factually accurate (distinguishing fact from opinion), concise and analytical. We will promptly correct mistakes when we become aware of them.

- 1.18 Our recording will describe the experience of the child so that someone reading the file will understand what it is like to be a child in the family.
- 1.19 The case file will be an accurate and up to date record of our work with a family. Case notes should be updated as soon as possible and no later than 3 working days after the event. Any safeguarding concerns should be recorded by the end of the working day.
- 1.20 We will work with curiosity, tenacity and openness, as set out in our current Service Development Plan.
- 1.21 Our work will be guided by all relevant statutory guidance, local procedures and by the Somerset Practice Framework. All staff will be given training and support to understand how the Practice Framework applies to their roles.

b) Quality at a glance



c) Minimum standards at a glance

Decisions about the frequency of visits, assessments, reviews of plans and supervision should be made on a case by case basis, informed by the needs of the child. This decision should be regularly reviewed to ensure that the child's needs continue to be met.

The table below sets out the **minimum** standard for visits, assessment, reviews and supervision of children in Somerset.

	Family Intervention Service	Children with Disabilities Level 2/3	Children in Need	Child Protection	Children Looked After	Care leavers
How often the child/ young person will be seen	Every 4 weeks (often weekly in early stages) (N/A Level 2 Young Carers)	Level 2- 6 monthly (agreed within the Early Support Assessment) Level 3 – 3 monthly	Every 4 weeks	Fortnightly	Within a week of change in placement, then every 6 weeks (Unless formally reduced)	Within a week of any change in accommodation and then every 2 months.
Assessments of circumstances	EHA and plan within 30 working days of allocation (including TAC Meeting) and reviewed 6 monthly.	Early Support Record and Plan within 45 days of contact and reviewed 6 monthly.	Child and Family Assessment within 45 working days of referral and reviewed annually	Child and Family Assessment updated for every CP Conference (3 months then, 6 monthly)	Child and Family Assessment to be updated in line with agreement at Permanence panel. See * below table. Pathway Plan in place and reviewed	Pathway Plan reviewed every 6 months for up to the age of 21. 21 – 25 years as agreed with the young person;

	(Level 4 as per CIN/ CP/CLA) Young Carers annual				every 6 months for 16 – 18 year olds.	recommended 6 monthly.
Review of the plan	3 months after the EHA and plan is completed and 3 monthly thereafter. (N/A for Level 2 -Young Carers)	Early Support Plan reviewed 6 monthly.	Review Meetings – Every 2 months	Core Group Meetings – 1 st meeting 10 working days from ICPC, then every 4 weeks Review Meeting- at 3 months then every 6 months	CLA Reviews to be held within 20 working days, 3 months then, 6 monthly. Review within 20 working days of any placement change	Pathway Plan reviewed every 6 months for up to the age of 21. 21 – 25 years as agreed with the young person; recommended 6 monthly.
Supervision	<p>All children should be discussed in supervision at least once every three months. If the supervisee or supervisor feels that the level of risk or complexity requires a more frequent discussion, then this should be agreed between both parties and actioned.</p> <p>(Level 2 - CWD and Level 2 Young Carers likely to be 6 monthly if the plan is only reviewed every 6 months)</p>					

Permanence Panel considers all children in the below circumstances and has oversight of Children and Families assessment/Care planning/Child Permanence Reports (CPR).

Children in the following circumstances require a regular holistic C and F assessment and those coloured Yellow will have CPRs.

Permanence Panel regularly reviews a range of children and young people including:

- i. CLA not permanently matched with the same carer, where they have been in care for more than nine months.
- ii. Children and young people in residential care, post proceedings.
- iii. Children U12 in residential care, whether they are in proceedings or not.
- iv. All children and young people S20, or post-proceedings, with more than 2 placements in last 6 months.
- v. Any child Placed with Parents (Care Planning Regs) for more than 6 months (currently on area legal tracking).
- vi. CLA in unregulated placements.
- vii. CLA in secure placements.
- viii. Any child where the Agency Decision Maker decision has been changed from adoption.
- ix. Children with Placement Order who have been waiting over 4 months.
- x. Children placed in adoption placements for 3 months with no current application for Adoption Order.

Children **not** considered by Permanence Panel are those who are long-term matched and do **not** require routine C and Fs as they have care plans updated every 6 months; those living in semi- independence - who will have pathway plans due to age; children whose adoptions are progressing in a timely way - who will have CPRs.

Children **not** considered by Permanence Panel do **not** require an annual C and F unless required in response to changes in need/circumstances.

Section 2: Assessing the needs of children, young people and families

a) Expectations around quality

- 2.1 We will ensure that families understand that they need to give their consent for an assessment to be completed and we will discuss what it means to work together to complete the assessment. We will agree with them who else will contribute to the assessment and see a copy of the assessment.
- 2.2 The needs and views of the child will be the most important part of any assessment, and workers will find creative ways to let children give their views.
- 2.3 The needs of parent carers of disabled children will be assessed as part of the child's assessment to provide a holistic view of the family's needs, unless the parent carer requests a standalone parent carer assessment.
- 2.4 Assessments will be based on evidence obtained from talking to children/ young people, their families, other people who support them and professionals working with the family.
- 2.5 Assessments should consider all the needs that the child/ young person may have, including:
 - Age • Ethnicity • Religion • Language
 - Gender identity • Sexuality • Disability
- 2.6 Assessments will point out any strengths, as well as any needs and risks that relate to the family and their environment. We will focus on the parent/ carer's capacity to meet those needs and consider any support they may need.
- 2.7 During the assessment, workers will listen to and talk with families about the worries that were raised in the referral, and any other worries that come up.
- 2.8 Assessments will consider the family history and how this might impact on what is happening for the child and family now.
- 2.9 Assessments will include information about all the people in the household, and any other people who are important to the children, whether they see them or not. It is important to get the views of any parents (or other adults with Parental Responsibility) who are not living with the children.

- 2.10 Assessments will set out clearly the views of all those who contribute and separate this from the opinion of the worker.
- 2.11 A copy of the draft assessment will be shared with the family and the worker will meet with them to discuss the assessment and what the next steps will be. They will be given the opportunity to comment on the content and their views on the completed assessment will be included.
- 2.12 When the assessment is finished, a plan will be written with the family, which they understand. This will set out what will happen to support them, when it will happen by, and who will provide support.

b) Minimum standards

- 2.13 Decisions about next steps will be recorded within one working day of a contact being received (5 working days for CWD Early Support and Family Intervention Service (FIS) Teams).
- 2.14 Team Managers will allocate new referrals within one working day (5 working days for CWD Early Support and FIS Teams), where this is not possible then managers will record a case note outlining plans for allocation and support proportionate to the risk and need.
- 2.15 Management oversight and analysis will be recorded on all contacts and referrals prior to transfer or closure. Referrals that need an assessment will be sent to the relevant team within one working day of the decision being made.
- 2.16 The timescale for completion of the assessment will be proportionate to the needs identified in the referral and agreed at the point of allocation. The assessment should be completed by this date unless an extension is agreed and recorded by the Team Manager.

c) Children in Need

- 2.17 Children who have a Child in Need plan in place will have an up to date assessment that is updated fully at least once a year.

d) Child Protection

2.18 An assessment will be prepared for every Child Protection Conference. These will be shared with the parents (and children, if appropriate) at least 2 days in advance of an Initial Conference and 5 days in advance of a Review Conference.

e) Children Looked After

2.19 Children who are looked after will have an assessment of their circumstances as agreed by Permanence Panel (see page 9 above). The assessment will consider any changes in the child/ young person's birth family and whether these relationships are being supported appropriately. This assessment will also review whether the placement is the best place for them to be, and whether there is a possibility that they can live with their parents, family members or friends.

f) Care Leavers

2.20 There should be a Pathway Plan in place when the Leaving Care worker takes on responsibility for the young person. The Pathway Plan should be reviewed every 6 months and take account of the following:

- The young person;
- The parents;
- The current carer;
- The school/college and the education service;
- Employment (if applicable)
- Any Independent Visitor;
- Any person providing health care or treatment for the young person;
- The Personal Adviser;
- Any other relevant person including, in the case of a young person with special needs, a representative from Adult Services;
- A care leaver's needs in relation to their status as a victim of trafficking or an unaccompanied asylum seeking child must be considered when the local authority is preparing an assessment of needs. Also, to require that, where a child is a victim of trafficking or an unaccompanied asylum seeking child, the local authority must consider whether their related needs are being met when reviewing the child's pathway plan (see amended Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010).

- 2.21 A decision not to include significant people must be recorded in the young person's file.
- 2.22 Where the young person refuses to engage in the assessment process, this should be recorded, together with any actions taken to ascertain the young person's views.

g) Fostering

- 2.23 Enquiries from potential carers will be responded to within 48 hours. The initial home visit report will be completed within 10 days following the initial home visit. Applicants will be kept informed of the assessment process and be made aware of what to expect at every step of the journey. Any concerns will be discussed with the applicants openly.
- 2.24 Assessments of carers should be concluded within a 4-month period. The reasons for any extension of this timeframe will be recorded on the carer's file by the Team Manager.
- 2.25 The assessment process will prepare applicants through training and reflective discussions. They will be clear about the commitment they are making to children and the crucial role they play in improving outcomes for children.

h) Kinship Team

- 2.26 Assessments of kinship carers will focus on the carers' capacity to meet the need of specific children, with an understanding around the impact of early trauma on children's well-being and development, and the applicants' ability to manage the complexities that often exist within the adult relationships.
- 2.27 Special Guardian assessments will be completed within 12 weeks of allocation (unless otherwise directed by the court)
- 2.28 Assessments of connected persons will be completed within 16 weeks. Extensions of up to 8 weeks can be agreed with management oversight recording the reasons for any extension.

Section 3: Planning and reviewing our involvement with families

a) Expectations around quality

- 3.1 We will ensure families understand how often they can expect to see their worker; this will be based on need and risk. This will be discussed at multiagency meetings, within Supervision and will be recorded on the plan.
- 3.2 Reports and plans for meetings are developed with families and shared in advance so there are no surprises for them during a meeting.
- 3.3 Plans will be:
 - Easily understood by families
 - Focused on supporting children and families to lead the changes that will improve their lives
 - SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-scaled)
- 3.4 We will work with families to identify important people who can support them. We will consider Family Group Conferences as a way of helping families to come up with their own solutions.
- 3.5 Purposeful direct work will be undertaken with children and young people as identified in their plan. This will:
 - Be creative
 - Use tools that are suitable for children's needs and abilities
 - Focus on helping children understand their history and support a positive understanding of their own identity
 - Help children tell us what needs to change from their point of view
- 3.6 All children and young people will have an up to date plan which is regularly reviewed in a face to face meeting. We will talk to families about who attends meetings. Children and young people will be listened to and supported to work out how they could take part in the review, including offering an advocate where necessary.
- 3.7 Independent Reviewing Officers and Child Protection Coordinators have a key role to play in supporting the development of quality plans that meet the needs of children and their families, as detailed in their vision, values and Practice Standards.

b) Minimum standards

- 3.8 The frequency of review is dependent on the needs of the individual child and family and should be increased when necessary, however minimum expectations apply for each case status as detailed in minimum standards at a glance (page 7).
- 3.9 Minutes of meetings (or outcomes of Child Protection Conferences) should be distributed as soon as possible and no later than within 5 working days. (This excludes the outcomes of Child Looked After Review Meetings which will be circulated within 20 working days, or sooner wherever possible.)
- 3.10 Plans will be updated within 10 working days of any review.
- 3.11 The frequency of case supervision and management oversight will be determined by the needs of the child and their family. All children should be discussed in supervision at least once every three months. If the supervisee or supervisor feels that the level of risk or complexity requires a more frequent discussion, then this should be agreed between both parties and actioned. For children involved with Level 2 CWD and Level 2 Young Carers this is likely to be 6 monthly if the plan is only reviewed every 6 months.
- 3.12 In order to understand the family history and reasons for current involvement all children/young people will have a case summary and chronology that reflects their current circumstances. This will be updated at least every 3 months for CWD Early Support Level 3, 6 months for CWD Level 2/ Level 2 Young Carers and monthly for all other children.

c) Family Intervention Service

- 3.13 Team Around the Child (TAC) meetings should ideally take place every 6 weeks to help develop an understanding of what changes are being made, although as a minimum this must be 3 monthly.

d) Children in Need

- 3.14 Review meetings, usually chaired by the Social Worker (can be chaired by any other professional within the team around the child, as necessary), will take place at least once every 2 months to make sure that the plan is moving forwards and still meets the needs of the family.

3.15 Section 17 Short Breaks should be reviewed within the Child in Need Plan and Child and Family Assessment.

e) Child Protection

3.16 All children who have a Child Protection Plan will have an allocated Child Protection Coordinator who will chair the Child Protection Conference and make sure that the Child Protection Plan is meeting the needs of the child and their family. A consultation is available in advance of the Strategy Meeting to support decision making. A pre-conference consultation will take place between the Child Protection Coordinator and the Social Worker for a family. The Child Protection Coordinator will ensure that they provide clear oversight of children's plans in between reviews.

3.17 A Core Group meeting must take place every 4 weeks, this will review progress on the Child Protection Plan. In addition, Review Child Protection Conferences take place initially 3 months after a Child Protection Plan is made and every 6 months thereafter.

3.18 Reports for Child Protection Conferences will be shared with families, and children where appropriate - 2 working days in advance of an ICPC and 5 working days in advance of an RCPC.

3.19 When a child leaves Somerset (e.g. on holiday or an interim arrangement) the Social Worker must notify the Child Protection Coordinator, core group members and the relevant local authority in which the child is staying. The relevant local authority should be notified at time of placement, with a reminder sent every six months and a further notification when child moves back to Somerset or to another local authority.

3.20 When a child moves out of Somerset permanently the Social Worker must request a Transfer Case Conference is held within 15 days in the area where the child is permanently resident. Arrangements for visiting and overseeing the child's safety and progress in the interim must also be negotiated. If there is dispute, then this will be escalated to the Team Manager who will seek to resolve the issue.

3.21 Every effort will be made to involve children in Child Protection Conferences, through either supporting them to attend the meeting or offering an advocate to represent them. If parents need help to understand and contribute to the meeting, then an advocate should be offered where necessary.

f) Children Looked After

3.22 The decision for a child to come into care is a significant one and needs careful consideration and planning. This may be discussed at all/ any of the following:

- Care Diversion Meeting
- Strategy Meeting
- Public Law Outline Meeting
- Area Legal Threshold Meeting
- Legal Gateway Panel

3.23 Placement requests must fully detail the child's needs, their strengths and any risks, in order to find the best placement possible. Placements will be found as near to the child's community as possible, unless there is a clear and evidenced reason for them to be placed further away. When having discussions to consider if a placement is a good match for a child the Supervising Social Worker (SSW) and child's Social Worker should consider the impact on any other children already in the placement and consult with the respective Social Worker/s.

3.24 Placement Planning meetings (chaired by the allocated Social Worker) will be held prior to children and young people coming into care or moving placement. In an emergency, the meeting should take place as soon as possible, but no later than five days after the move. The purpose of this meeting is to consider all aspects of how the child is going to be cared for, and any additional needs and support. When a child becomes looked after or changes placement the following will happen (in advance wherever possible):

- Professionals will work together to make sure the child has their belongings with them at the time of their move
- Carers or residential placements will be provided with all the relevant information to care for the child/ young person
- Children will be given a copy of the 'living away from home' pack, including how to make a complaint
- Children's Advocacy and Independent Reviewing Service will be informed (within 1 working day) to make sure that the first CLA review can be held within 20 working days
- Plans will be agreed to support continued school/ college attendance
- The Social Worker, school and Virtual School will work together to ensure that a Personal Education Plan (PEP) meeting is held within 20 working days and every term thereafter (not relevant for CWD CLA Short Breaks).

- Arrangements will be made for the child/ young person to maintain links to the birth family and friends
 - Consideration will be given to the child/young person pursuing their hobbies/ interests
 - A request for an Independent Visitor or advocate will be made, if appropriate.
 - Arrangements will be made for the child to undergo an Initial Health Assessment (for newly looked after children only) or a review Health Assessment.
 - For children who are placed with Independent Foster Carers or residential providers, an Independent Placement Agreement (IPA) will clearly set out how the placement will meet the child's needs.
- 3.25 The Delegated Authority Form will be completed after consultation with the relevant people and then circulated. This should be in advance of the placement wherever possible, or within 5 working days. This helps to ensure that everyone is clear about different people's roles in caring for the child.
- 3.26 An initial CLA review meeting must take place within 20 days of a child becoming looked after. Thereafter a review meeting will take place after 3 months, and then every 6 months, as a minimum. A review should be held early where there is a significant change to the care plan.
- 3.27 Plans for the child's permanence need to be proactively considered and reflected within key documents such as their care plan and any assessments. A Permanence Planning Meeting should be held prior to the 2nd CLA Review, and then regularly, to discuss with parents and carers the child's plan until permanence is secured. Social Workers may need to actively pursue more than one plan for permanence concurrently in order to achieve permanence in a timely way for children.
- 3.28 Care plans are a key document that the child/ young person should have a copy of. They must:
- Reflect the wishes/ views of the child/ young person, or specify why certain wishes cannot be supported
 - Reflect the current circumstances and be updated within 10 days of a CLA Review
 - Detail any help that is being provided to the parents, if relevant
 - Detail how connections with parents and other important people in the child's network will be supported

- 3.29 Children/ young people will be supported to maintain their connections with members of their family and other important people in their lives. Social Workers should have a full understanding of how Family Time is affecting the child. Social Workers should work closely with the carers and Family Time Workers, read available notes and consider supervising some family time themselves.
- 3.30 Children/ young people in care will be supported to have strong and trusting relationships with their Social Workers. Visits need to be frequent enough to support this relationship. Children in some circumstances may have less frequent visits.
- 3.31 Guidance for visiting CLA is as follows:
- Within one week of the start of any placement
 - Thereafter, at intervals of not more than six weeks for the first year of placement
 - Where a child is in a matched long-term foster placement, visits after the first year may take place at intervals of not more than six months, where the child, being of sufficient age and understanding, has agreed to be visited at this minimum frequency, and this has been agreed and recorded in CLA review **Care planning 2015 regs**
- 3.32 If a child is looked after in a different local authority then that local authority will be informed in advance wherever possible, or on the same working day as the move. Alerts will also be sent to the education and health services in that area. The Social Worker will also update the local authority if the child leaves their area.
- 3.33 CLA reviews will be child centred. Older children will be asked who they would like to attend their review meetings and where they would like the meeting to be held. Children will be encouraged to attend their review meetings and offered other options to help them participate, such as an advocate to help them express their views.
- 3.34 All children who are looked after, will have an allocated Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) who will chair the Child Looked After (CLA) Review and scrutinise the quality of the child's plan. IROs have a key role to play in scrutinising the child/ young person's care plan and holding people to account, they must be kept informed of any significant changes in the child / young person's circumstances.

3.35 Prior to every CLA Review there will be a Pre-Meeting consultation and up to date Care Plan. This should be shared with the child / young person, their parents (where appropriate), carers and the IRO at least 5 working days prior to the review meeting.

g) Care Leavers

3.36 Within 3 months of their 16th birthday CLA will have a Pathway Plan which is informed by an up-to-date and thorough Needs Assessment. When a young person is in care, the Social Worker (from the CLA Team) will be supported by the Leaving Care worker to develop the assessment of needs and the Pathway Plan alongside the young person. When the young person leaves care this responsibility moves to the Leaving Care Team. These documents will be shared with young people and written in a way they can understand.

3.37 This Pathway Plan will detail:

- How the young person will be supported to prepare for adulthood and independence, including how to manage risk in their lives
- How links with their family will be maintained, and positive relationships developed
- How the young person will be supported to access education and employment opportunities

3.38 The first review (after the age of 18) will be chaired by the IRO. Transfers to the Leaving Care Team will be as smooth as possible, with introductions managed so that the young person and others involved are clear about everyone's role.

3.39 Contact with care leavers will be maintained so that we can understand their circumstances and provide any support they need. If contact is lost, then proactive efforts will be made to re-establish contact as soon as possible, or a clear reason recorded on file as to why this would not be appropriate.

3.40 Young people will be informed about their entitlement as care leavers, set out in the Leaving Care Local Offer.

h) Fostering

3.41 We will acknowledge and respond to referrals for placements within one working day or immediately for an emergency request.

- 3.42 Where possible, we will identify placement options from local authority resources. If this is not possible, agreement to commence an external agency placement search will be sought from the Deputy Director (Head of Service if Deputy Director is unavailable).
- 3.43 There will be close communication with the child's Social Worker and the placement team about the placement finding progress, and matching. The child's Social Worker will be provided with a full and detailed summary of the placement options, including relevant supporting information such as Form F, Fostering Assessment, Ofsted reports and Carers' profiles.
- 3.44 If it felt that a placement is not right for the child or family, then the reasons for this will be discussed and recorded transparently.
- 3.45 The Operations Manager (Fostering) must approve any internal fostering placements that are outside of the carer's approval. This will be presented to the Fostering Panel and ratified by the Agency Decision Maker.
- 3.46 If a child is to be placed outside of Somerset, agreement must be sought from the Director of Children's Services.
- 3.47 Supervising Social Worker will provide foster carers with monthly supervision. If the decision is made to reduce this frequency, for example for matched long-term placements, then there will be management oversight on the carer's file to record the rationale for this with this decision being reviewed every 3 months.
- 3.48 Foster Carers will be supported to continuously develop their skills and knowledge through a range of learning opportunities and reflective discussions in supervision. Foster Carers will have a Personal Development Plan that is updated at least annually and tailored to the individual needs of carers.
- 3.49 The Fostering Service will consult and gain feedback from foster carers, children, and professionals as part of the review process. Reviews will be chaired by a reviewing officer, and reports will be presented to the fostering panel or the Strategic Operations Manager for consideration. We will undertake Foster Carer reviews annually, and whenever there are concerns or requirements to do so, an interim review will take place.
- 3.50 Foster Carer profiles will be up to date and child friendly.

- 3.51 We will work closely with foster carers and other professionals and identify when support planning meetings are needed and hold these to address any placement instability, issues or concerns.
- 3.52 We see the child in placement at least every third visit and if this is not possible the reasons will be recorded on the carers' file.
- 3.53 We see the non-primary carer in placement at least every third visit and if this is not possible the reasons will be recorded on the carers' file and will be discussed with the Fostering Team Manager.
- 3.54 Foster Carers will complete end of placement letters after each placement has ended and a copy will be uploaded to LCS (carer and child).

i) **Adoption**

- 3.55 Somerset County Council adoption services are delivered by the regional adoption agency, Adopt South West. Somerset County Council retains responsibility for the agency decision that a child should be adopted, and financial responsibility for adoption allowances.

j) **Kinship**

- 3.56 Support of connected persons carers will be in line with that of mainstream foster carers (with some variations).
- 3.57 Special Guardians who are receiving ongoing support will have the support plan reviewed at least every 4 months.
- 3.58 Special Guardians who have support from the Adoption Support Fund will have this support reviewed at least every 6 months.
- 3.59 Special Guardians who receive ongoing financial support will have this support reviewed every 12 months.

Section 4: Stepping down our involvement with families

a) Expectations around quality

- 4.1 When Children's social care involvement is stepping down or ending, there will be a meeting to ensure families and professionals are involved in reviewing the child's plan. When CSC involvement is ending, this will be based on need and risk.
- 4.2 CSC stepping down and/or ending involvement will be agreed at the child's meeting with the family and professionals so that everyone knows the plan for the child.

b) CSC closure record will detail:

- 4.3 How our intervention improved outcomes for the child/ren.
- 4.4 The date of the stepdown/CIN review meeting which agreed stepdown.
- 4.5 That the family are aware of the step-down plan.
- 4.6 That all professionals involved with the child are aware of the stepdown plan.
- 4.7 The step-down plan.
- 4.8 Who is taking over as the lead professional.
- 4.9 The contingency plan if we become worried about the children again.
- 4.10 Confirmation that the closure information including closure letter has been sent to family and professionals?
- 4.11 Management oversight providing rationale for CSC stepping down involvement.

c) After the meeting that agrees stepdown or closure:

- 4.12 The meeting record and updated Child's plan will be shared with the family and all professionals working with the family.
- 4.13 A letter outlining the ending of CSC involvement and contingency plan for the family will be sent to the family and professionals working with the family.

d) Child in Need and Child Protection

4.14 Children who have a child in need plan will have multiagency Child in Need meetings with their family and professionals who are working with them.

e) After the meeting:

4.15 The meeting record and updated Child's plan will be shared with the family and all professionals working with the family.