

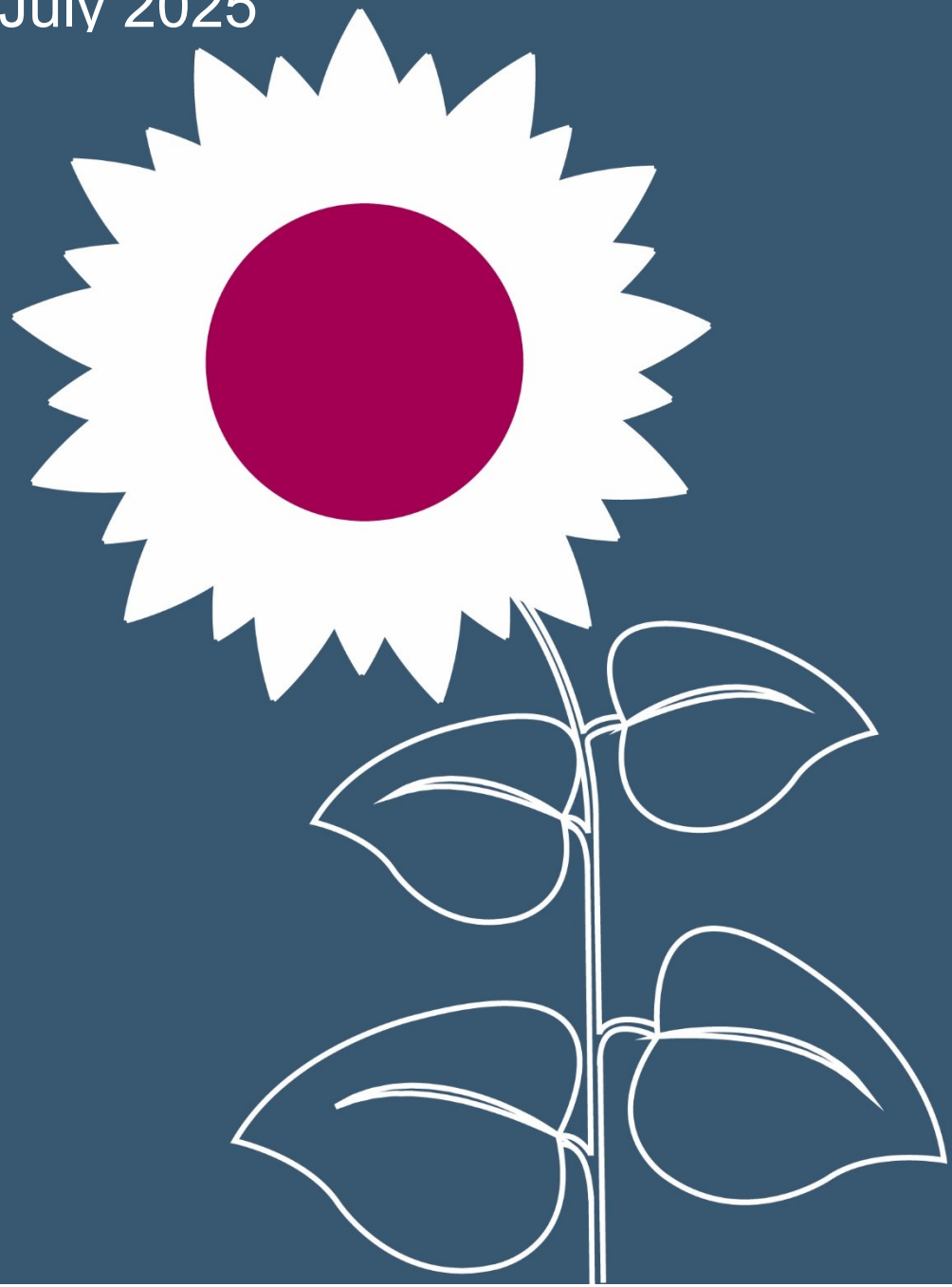


City of
Stoke-on-Trent

Active Involvement of Children

Tri X 5_1_27 July 2024

Review date July 2025



INFORMATION SHEET

Service area	Children's Social Care
Date effective from	Dec 2013
Responsible officer(s)	Strategic Manager Children in Care
Date of review(s)	March 2021 July 2022 August 2023 July 2024
Status: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory (all named staff must adhere to guidance) • Optional (procedures and practice can vary between teams) 	Mandatory
Target audience	Residential Staff in the Small Group Homes and Woodview Children with Disabilities Respite and Outreach Service
Date of committee/SMT decision	
Related document(s)	
Superseded document(s)	July 2023
File reference	5_1_27

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Involving children in every aspect of their day-to-day life and future planning is fundamental to the culture of both living and working in a residential children's home in Stoke-on-Trent.
- 1.2 This policy focuses on children's participation and how a culture of meaningful involvement can be created and maintained. It also looks at how carers can work closely with children in care to ensure a warm, safe and nurturing environment.
- 1.3 Children in care should be fully involved in every aspect of their life and every opportunity should be taken to obtain, record and act upon children's wishes, feelings and opinions.

2 Aim of the Policy

- 2.1 The overall aim of this policy to ensure that key values and principles are adopted by all carers when working with, and caring for, children in care. It highlights specific areas where participation is essential. It also emphasises the importance of anti-discriminatory practice and children's rights.
- 2.2 The aim is that children are involved as much as possible, from planning activities to being involved in the design and delivery of Children's Services.

3 Legislative Context

- 3.1 Participation is a key issue that is addressed in the **Children's Homes Regulations 2015**. An important aim highlighted is that all children should be "encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the home is run".

4 Young People's Meetings/House Meetings

- 4.1 House meetings should take place on a regular basis. All young people need to be made aware of the meetings and encouraged to attend.
- 4.2 A record should be kept of each meeting for staff reference and available to young people should they wish to see it. Wherever possible each child should be enabled to chair the meeting and take minutes.
- 4.3 All young people should be encouraged to raise any issues relevant to them. If the matter is individual to a particular young person then a separate meeting should be arranged with that young person (1:1 discussion).

- 4.4 Carers should attend the meeting to offer support and advice and can also raise any issues that are relevant to the young people's lives in the home. However the meeting is for the young people and care needs to be taken to prevent carers taking over the meeting.

5 Individual Meetings with the Child

- 5.1 Each child should have the opportunity to be listened to on an individual basis.
- 5.2 Each child should be able meet individually with the Registered Manager as well as carers in order to discuss any matters important to them. The Registered Manager should ensure all children know when they will be at the home.
- 5.3 Any meeting should be recorded and the child's social worker informed of any information that needs to be shared. If a child does not wish to attend the House meeting then efforts should be made to speak individually with the child and take any matters forward to the meeting on their behalf.

6 Children's Notice Board

- 6.1 There should be a notice board in each home specifically for the children. A variety of information can be displayed, with the aim of raising awareness about different topics and ensuring they are informed about events. For example:
- Menus for the week.
 - Events taking place in Stoke-on-Trent.
- 6.2 The notice board can also play an important role in raising each child's self-esteem. For example, any achievements could be displayed, from home, school or elsewhere. If young people do not want this, it should be clearly recorded on the child's file or in house meeting minutes.

7 Household Jobs

- 7.1 Children are encouraged and supported to be involved in aspects of their life in residential care and to take part in everyday jobs to promote independence skills. This includes contributing to the maintenance of the cleanliness and tidiness of the home.

- 7.2 Each child needs to be encouraged to take part in ensuring that the building is kept clean. Each child should be given daily tasks to complete, as part of the daily running of the home, dependent on their age and abilities. Carers should also contribute and tasks should rotate so each child has an opportunity to take part in all parts of living within a family.
- 7.3 Each child should be encouraged tidy their own room according to their age and ability.

8 Leisure Activities and Use of Technology

Leisure Activities

- 8.1 Every effort should be made to ensure that each child has the opportunity to take part in a variety of leisure activities, both within and out of the home. This means close partnership working with other professionals, especially colleagues within the Youth Service.
- 8.2 Membership of local groups and clubs should be encouraged and each child should be supported so they have the confidence to take part in any activity.
- 8.3 There should be a variety of games and books within the home for each child to use. Carers should encourage each child to play and read within the home.
- 8.4 Games and DVDs should also be available within the home. Care should be taken to ensure that these are not subject to overuse. All games and DVDs must also be age appropriate, and therefore children should only use those games etc that comply with the relevant age category.

Use of the Internet and email

- 8.5 Each child should have access to or know where to access a computer and the Internet. There will be a clear individualised Risk Assessment for each young person around access to the internet and any connected devices. This Risk Assessment will be shared with and agreed by the relevant professionals who support the young person and supported by clear discussions with the young person around any restrictions.

Holidays

- 8.6 Each child should be given the opportunity to go on holiday whilst living in the home. This should be in school holiday time only.

9 Working with Different Cultures and Addressing Discrimination

- 9.1 Research shows that there continue to be high numbers of black children and young people in the care system. Everyone needs to be aware of the issues that arise because of this and adopt a positive approach when working with black children and children with different religions, cultures and languages to help them establish a positive identity and to enable them to obtain skills to deal with racism in society.
- 9.2 There may be specific needs that arise as a result of a child's race and cultural background. For example:
- **Language:** English may not be a child's first language or they may not speak English at all. In these circumstances an interpreting service may be required.
 - **Religion:** Each child should have access to a place of worship if they wish to practice their religion. This could be a Christian church, a mosque, synagogue or other religious centre that is required.
 - **Support Network:** It is important that each child has access to a wide network of support, especially from individuals and groups who share their own ethnicity, culture and religion. It should be the child's choice whether they want to make use of additional support but this should be encouraged as much as possible.
- 9.3 It is important that everyone's cultural, language, racial and religious backgrounds are celebrated. This could be achieved within the home through celebrating all cultural festivals, food, books, games and posters.
- 9.4 Should a racist incident occur this should be recorded and dealt with as soon as possible. It is important to note that this is an offence and therefore the person subject to the incident has the right to contact the Police.

10 Children's Rights and Complaints

- 10.1 Each child has the right to have access to independent professionals who can advocate on their behalf. Wherever possible they should be enabled to join groups that could help raise their esteem and encourage them to make their views and voice heard. Each child also has the right to complain about any aspect of life in care. They should be made aware of the process for doing this. [Ref. LAC Procedures. Complaints](#)

11 Meetings and Paperwork

- 11.1 The **Care Standards Act 2000** requires a Registered Manager to have an overview of each child's Placement Plan and all over documentation relevant to the child. This means the Registered Manager must ensure that all documentation required for a child in care must be current and on file.
- 11.2 The Registered Manager needs to ensure that all statutory meetings take place regarding a child and that a representative from the home attends and contributes. This is essential as information sharing and joint decision-making help achieve the best possible outcomes for a child.
- 11.3 It is also important that the child attends as many meetings relevant to them as possible. This gives them the opportunity to give their own views and take part in the decision making process.
- 11.4 There are many different types of meetings for the child:
- **Placement Agreement Meeting:** This highlights why a placement is needed and identifies how the child's needs will be met.
 - **Care Planning Meeting:** This looks at the future plans for the child.
 - **Statutory Review:** These take place within 1 month of a child's placement, then within 3 months, and then within 6 months thereafter. The purpose of these meetings is to review the child's placement and Care Plan. Carers should attend each one, supporting the child during the meeting and sharing information about how the child is progressing within the placement.
 - **Professionals Meeting:** This is the only meeting where the child should not be present. This is due to the fact that sensitive information could be shared between professionals.
 - **One to one sessions:** These can take place if there is anything specific that may be causing concern about the child's placement, behaviour or longer-term plan and carers or the Registered Manager should facilitate these meetings
- 11.5 It is the responsibility of the child's social worker to make any amendments to the LAC documentation. It is the responsibility of the carers to monitor and keep up to date all residential paperwork. Where amendments are needed, these should be discussed with the child. Once agreed, changes to paperwork should be made as soon as possible and the social worker informed. Any amendments need to be authorised by the Registered Manager.