Somerset Practice Guidance for Placement with Parents

Quality Assurance Service Manager (CLA)

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Contents

[1. Introduction 2](#_Toc72827746)

[2. Completing a Placement with Parents Assessment 2](#_Toc72827747)

[3. Oversight and review 3](#_Toc72827748)

# Introduction

* This guidance relates to the child/ren, who are subject of a Care Order and are to be placed with their parent(s), or a person with Parental Responsibility for the child, or a person in whose favour a Child Arrangements Order or Special Guardianship Order was in force prior to the Care Order being made.
* This includes periods of agreed overnight contact; a series of short term stays with their parents as well as where there is a plan for full-time reunification.
* It does not apply to children subject to Interim Care Orders where the placement is required by the Court under Section 38(6) Children Act 1989 for the purposes of assessment, (and is therefore not subject to the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010). If the child is subject to an Interim Care Order and the arrangement has not been directed by the Court, Legal advice should be sought as the arrangement may be subject to Placement with parents’ regulations.
* This following guidance should be read in conjunction with the Tri X chapter relating to Placement with Parents.
* A decision to place a child with a parent should be preceded by the required assessment and the agreement of the Head of Service. There is guidance on Tri X about what should happen in exceptional circumstances when an immediate placement is needed.
* Consideration of planned reunification and the introduction of overnight family time with parents should be part of the child’s CLA review and any proposed changes to the Care Plan discussed with their IRO
* The [NSPCC Reunification Practice Framework Guidance](https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/1095/reunification-practice-framework-guidance.pdf) provides detailed best practice guidance around how to make returns home a success.

# Completing a Placement with Parents Assessment

* Prior to the arrangement commencing, a Placement with Parents Assessment should be completed using the form on LCS. The assessment needs to be authorised by a Head of Service and should include the views of the Team Manager and IRO.
* The assessment should be completed within 45 days, commencing with the consultation and request for checks to ensure these can be considered within the assessment.
* Where a child has returned to the home of a parent in an unplanned way, interim agreement should be sought from the Head of Service and if the child remains living with the parent the placement with parents assessment should then be completed within ten days.
* Any child who is subject to a Care Order has suffered or was likely to suffer significant harm. The assessment should address what has changed in parental capacity and circumstances that indicate a return would be in the child's best interest and will promote safe care.
* Agency checks and consultation documents are to be added to the form as attachments so that all documentation is easily located in one place.
* The assessment should conclude with a clear judgement on whether the proposed arrangement can be approved. Whether approved or not the assessment needs to clearly set out what needs to happen next, including any support for the parents or child.
* Arrangements need to be made to ensure the decision-making process is explained to the child with advocacy services being offered, where appropriate.

# Oversight and review

* The return home is a major change for families. Plans that clearly set out the support that will be offered to the family are more likely to lead to successful return home. The plan for a return home needs to be carefully considered and take place at a pace that is manageable.
* Once an arrangement is made the child’s social worker must visit weekly until the child’s review where visiting frequency will be agreed. Once the child has returned home, there should be a looked after review within 20 days.
* If the child is not returning home on a full-time basis but will be having regular extended family time, the Social Worker should arrange visits to see the child when they are at the family home.
* Any adults that join the family (new partners) after the assessment has been completed will require an update to the assessment including relevant agency checks.
* Ongoing review of the arrangement should be considered within the usual care planning process.
* Review of Placement with Parents arrangements is provided at either Legal Gateway (revocation of Care Order) or Permanence Panel (Continuing of arrangements) as appropriate. Panel oversight should be at least annually. This will include consideration of whether it is appropriate to seek revocation of the Care Order. This should also be actively considered within wider care planning and as part of the assessment process.