

To: AL CS's staff

Gail Hancock
Interim Director for Children's Safeguarding and Care
Shire Hall
Westgate Street
Gloucester,
GL1 2TG
email: gail.hancock@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Please ask for: Gail Hancock

Phone: 01452 425775

Our Ref: GH/dh

Your Ref:

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Dear Colleagues

Re: New Admission to Care Panel

I am very pleased to let you know about another positive development in respect of our work with children in our care, or at least children and young people who we are planning to bring into our care.

Bringing a child or young person into Local Authority care is a critical decision for everyone involved. This is an area of our practice that we know, and Ofsted has commented, needs to improve. At the moment too many children and young people are coming into our care in an unplanned way which means children and young people are then exposed to further upheaval with all the hurt and distress that causes.

We can, and we will, do better by improving our planning and decision making which will change the child or young person's initial experiences and lay down a solid foundation upon which to build stability and permanence.

Following analysis and review of current practice, we know that the following aspects of our practice prevent us providing the best care possible for all children all of the time and these are the priorities that we are seeking to address:

- Diversionary edge of care interventions are not routinely supporting families to continue caring for children and young people
- Planning and decision making is not timely or consistent when children and young people need to become looked after
- Too many placement requests are 'same day' even when children and young people have been known for a long time and this restricts placement searching
- Matching children and young people with suitable carers is sometimes rushed or not as thorough as it should be
- Short term placement stability is adversely affected by frequent placement changes when children and young people are not given the opportunity to experience the right placement first time
- Practice to manage placement disruption is not sufficiently well developed and too many children and young people, and their carers, do not receive pro-active support when it is needed

So, in response to these issues with effect from next week, on Wednesday 3 February 2021 and every Wednesday thereafter, we are introducing an **Admission to Care Panel**. This will be co-chaired by me and Philip Segurola, interim Assistant Director. The attached Admission to Care Guidance gives more details about the panel process and necessary documentation. Documentation has been kept to a minimum as we are keen to use what we routinely already have so that we keep the process lean. Panel slots need to be booked and paperwork presented by noon each Tuesday for the following days' panel.

We are in the process of setting up an Admission to Care e-mail drop box and these details will follow as soon as arrangements have been confirmed. At the moment these details are blank on the attachment but will be added and re-circulated with the guidance as soon as possible. In the meantime, and **only** for the Panel on 3 February next week, all documents should be forwarded straight to the Panel Coordinator, Toni Moyse-Poole.

If you have any questions or queries please direct these to your line manager/Head of Service.

As this is a new Panel, I anticipate that we will all learn new things. In the spirit of striving to be a learning organisation we will build this learning into our operating arrangements and hopefully become more efficient and effective as we move forward together. Thank you for your cooperation and support with the Admission to Care Panel.

Thank you for everything that you are doing to support vulnerable children and young people in Gloucestershire. Please stay safe and well.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G Hancock', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Gail Hancock
Interim Director for Children's Safeguarding & Care