

Making a Care Plan for a Child in Care

This guide provides additional information to assist social workers in the completion of the Bradford Care Plan for a child in care and should be read in conjunction with the procedures in respect of care planning on Tri.x and on LCS. The timeframes for completion and updating of Care plans is recorded in the procedures.

Please view also The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Vol. 2: Care planning, placement and case review.

Principles for a good Care Plan

The purpose of the Care Plan is to safeguard and promote the interests of the child or young person, prevent drift and focus work on achieving permanence.

The Care Plan is the most important document for a child in care. It should spell out how we will ensure the child or young person has safe and secure care that will help them to grow into healthy, happy and confident adults who can achieve their ambitions, forge positive relationships with others, and look after themselves.

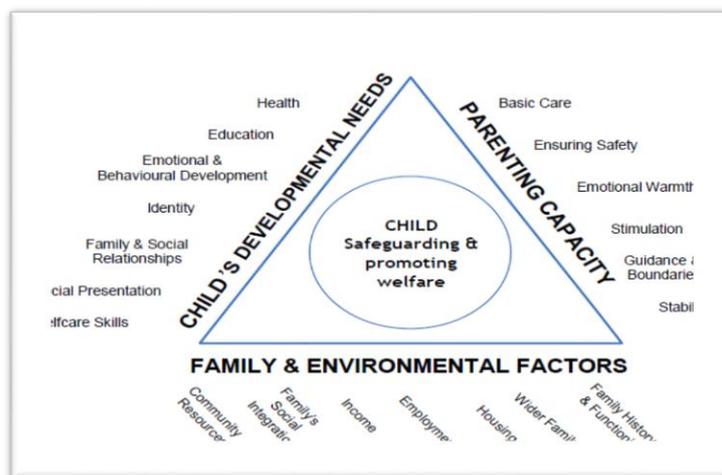
The Care Plan must be clear about the desired outcomes for the child or young person and what actions and outcomes can be expected from each agency. It must describe the services and interventions that are required to meet both the child or young person's day-to-day and longer term needs. In particular, this must include the type of placement required to meet their individual development needs, and clear detailed proposals for maintaining contact between the child or young person and their family and friends. The plan should identify how best to meet the specific needs of individual children or young people, in particular those with disabilities and with particular needs in relation to identity - e.g. gender identity, culture, faith, language and sexuality.

The plan should be written in simple and respectful language and be discussed and shared with children, young people and their families and carers to ensure they feel they have been treated with openness and honesty and understand the decisions that are made.

It should be created from information gathered from the most recent assessments, plans and care planning meetings and from discussions with the child or young person, their carers and family.

The plan should be regularly updated as things change. It is a live document and completed or out of date information should be removed.

The plan must consider all the sides of the assessment framework triangle: a good plan looks at parents'/carers' capacity and environmental factors as well as the child or young person's developmental needs.



It must have clear targets that are regularly reviewed at Care Planning Meetings and Child in Care Reviews to prevent drift and delay.

How to complete the Care Plan

Overall aim of the Plan and Timescales

The proposed permanence plan should be recorded here by the 2nd Child in Care review at the latest, although it is not confirmed until it has been ratified at the Decision-making Child in Care Review.

It is possible to select a number of outcomes, in order of preference, where plans are being twin or triple tracked.

There are 9 sections of the plan that explore the child or young person's needs in detail. Each section contains the basic following 4 sub-headings:

- What is going well?
- What are we worried about?
- Child or young person's views
- Next Steps

Some sections require additional information:

The **Placement** section of the plan should review how well the current placement is meeting the child or young person's needs and also what progress has been made towards the permanence plan. Actions required to secure permanence should be included in Next Steps.

Any actions from the Placement Plan should be incorporated into the Care Plan

Where appropriate, this section should also include a contingency plan should the current placement break down.

SDQ scores are used to understand the child or young person's **Emotional wellbeing and development**, and Social Workers should record the SDQ score and ensure that Next Steps are proposed to address the any concerns.

All assessments that have been completed during the review period should be used to inform the Care Plan. In particular, when completing the **Health and Education sections**, Social Workers should draw on the Health Assessment, the PEP and any EHCP that is in place, and any actions from those plans should be incorporated into the Care Plan.

In **Family time and contact**, social workers should not only consider the quality of current family time, but also whether the child or young person's needs require that any other parties should be offered family time.

What is going well? What are we worried about?

Bradford's Care Plan for a child in care uses the Signs of Safety framework questioning to ensure strengths and achievements are understood as well as unmet needs.

Although these are simple questions, the answers do not need to be simple: children and young people's lives are complex and nuanced and it is better not to attempt to reduce them to bullet points. Statements such as "We are worried about child's name self-harming' should be unpicked to say, for example; 'Sometimes child's name finds it difficult to cope with her feelings and she may cut herself. This most often happens if family time has been difficult or has been cancelled'

Child or young person's views

Each section asks for the child or young person's views about the information that is recorded in that section. Older children and young people should be shown a draft plan and asked for their comments. Social Workers should spend time with younger children using direct work tools to identify their views on all of the issues raised.

It is not good practice to record the same information for each section, e.g. Child's name says he wants to return home'.

Where the child or young person's views are in clear opposition to the plan proposed by Children's Social Care, the explanations of why their wishes and views have not been given absolute precedence should be recorded also, and the Social Worker should state what has been done/will be done to work towards reconciling them.

Next steps

The next steps from each section feed through onto the Summary sheet.

What needs to happen?

This is where the actions should be recorded. An action states what needs to be done and it will help you get this right if you start your action with a verb.

When writing an action, think about how you will know it has been successful. The more specific the action, the easier it will be to measure.

Including actions that everyone knows are unachievable devalues the plan – especially in the eyes of the child or young person. Actions such as ‘Parents will regularly attend family time’ can be framed as ‘Parents’ names appreciate that child’s name is upset when they cannot attend family time and will try to contact carers’ names the day before if they are unable to attend’.

Who will be responsible?

It is important to include parents, carers and children and young people in responsibility for actions as well as for workers.

A good care plan has actions for a wide range of professionals; the social worker should not take responsibility for everything. If there are never any actions for a particular professional, it may be useful to consider if they need to continue to be a part of the care planning process.

It is better to specify names as well as profession wherever possible as it personalises the plan for the child or young person and their family.

When does it need to be done by?

Always give dates for targets – never ‘ongoing’ or ‘next review’. Actions in a care plans should not be the kind that will happen all the time, such as statutory visits to the child. An action about visits should specify the work that needs to take place so that it can be time-limited, e.g. ‘Explore child’s name’s preferences in respect of family time with brothers’ and sisters’ names’.

Child in care reviews or care planning meetings can be used as targets, but it is still important to state the actual date, in case meeting dates need to change.

If actions need to carry over from one plan to the next, the target dates should be updated too. It is helpful to include why it was necessary to do this under ‘What we are worried about’.

What will it achieve?

Your purpose is to meet the child or young person’s needs: and it is easier to scope your objectives before identifying the actions to achieve them. Examples of objectives could be:

- Child's name will be able to engage in a full programme of learning at school.
- Child's name will have strategies to help them manage their feelings so that self-harming is reduced.
- Child's name will understand their journey into care and be able to explore why they are no longer able to live with their parents
- Child's name will be secured a permanent family home.

Longer term objectives can be repeated over several plans and broken down into bite sized actions that ideally can be completed within the review period of the plan.

Objectives should be child-centred: e.g. an action of Parents to attend Freedom programme by 28/02/2021, should be framed within an objective that is child centred, such as 'Parents will demonstrate their understanding of the impact of domestic abuse on child's name'

Views and Sharing

It is a statutory requirement that care plans are shared with children and young people, their parents and their carers and this section of the plan is used to monitor compliance, so it is important that it is completed.

The document can be printed off as a hard copy or sent as a pdf attachment by email.

Dissent with the plan should also be recorded here.

Planning & Reviewing

The review arrangements for the plan should be included here.

It is useful to record the date of the next care planning meeting in the section about arrangements for continued consultation with family and confirmation that family have the social worker's contact details.

Pathway Planning

When the young person becomes an 'eligible' or 'relevant' child under the Children Leaving Care Act 2000, their care plan should be incorporated into their Pathway Plan. Social Workers should complete a Pathway Plan instead, using the Leaving Well App to inform the Plan on LCS.



SMART actions mean that no-one is in doubt about what people need to do, by when and everyone will be able to see whether it has been done or not.

SMART actions help when you come to review the plan and want to hold people accountable for their tasks.

So: 'BPP worker to provide support'

Becomes: 'Twice weekly sessions to deliver 121 Family Links parenting programme by Sheila Smith- BPP and [carers' names] by 31/12/2021'