



Looked after Children

Policy Statement:

We are committed to providing a quality provision based on equality of opportunity for all children and their families. All staff in the provision are committed to doing all they can to enable 'looked after' children in care to achieve their full potential.

Children become 'looked after' if they have either been taken into care by the Local Authority or have been accommodated by the Local Authority (voluntary care arrangement). Most looked after children will be living in foster homes but a small number may be in a Children's Home, living with a relative or even placed back with their natural parent(s). We have a duty to inform the Local Authority if it comes to attention that a child maybe privately fostered.

We recognise that children who are being looked after have often experienced traumatic situations. This could range from physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect. However we also recognise that not all looked after children have experienced abuse and that there maybe a range of reasons for a child to be taken into the care of the Local Authority. Whatever the reason a child's separation from their home and family signifies a disruption in their lives that has an impact on their emotional wellbeing. Most Local Authorities do not place children under five with foster carers who work outside the home. However there maybe instances when this does occur or where the child has been placed with another family member who works. It is not appropriate for a looked after child who is under two years to be placed in day care setting in addition to a foster placement.

We place emphasis on promoting children's right to be strong, resilient and listened to. Our policy and practice guidelines for looked after children are based on two important concepts: attachments and resilience. The basis of this is to promote secure attachments in children's lives. These aspects of wellbeing underpin the child's responsiveness to learning and enable the development of positive dispositions for learning. For young people to get the most out of educational opportunities they need to be settled enough with their carer to be able to cope with further separation, a new environment and new expectations made upon them.

Principles

The term 'looked after child' denotes a child's current legal status. This term is never used to categorise a child as standing out from others. We do not refer to such a child using acronyms such as LAC.

We do not offer any placements to babies and children under the age of two.

We offer places to two year old children who are in care. We would like the child to have been with a foster carer for at least two months and shows an attachment to the carer and that the placement lasts for at least three months.

We offer places for funded three and four year olds who are in care to ensure they receive their entitlement to an early education. We expect that a child will have been with a foster carer for at least one month and that they will have formed a secure attachment to the carer. We expect the placement in the setting to last a minimum of six weeks.

We will offer play and stay sessions for the child and carer.

Where a child who normally attends our setting is taken into care and is cared for by a local foster carer, we will continue to offer the child a placement.

Procedures

The designated person for looked after children is the designated safeguarding lead

Every child is allocated a key person and the key person will liaise with agencies, professionals and practitioners involved with the child and his or her family and ensure that appropriate information is gained and shared.

The setting recognises the role of the Local Authority children's social care team as the child's corporate parent and the key agency in determining what takes place with the child. Nothing changes especially with regard to the birth's parent's or foster carer's role in relation to the setting, without prior discussion and agreement with the child's social worker.

At the start of the placement there is a professional's meeting to determine the objectives of the placement and draw up a care plan that incorporates the child's learning needs. This plan is reviewed after two weeks, six weeks and three months. There after three to six monthly intervals.

The care plan needs to consider issues for the child such as:

- Their emotional needs and how they will be met
- How any emotional issues and problems that affect behaviour are to be managed
- Their sense of self, culture, languages and identity – how this is to be supported.
- Their need for sociability and friendship
- Their interests and abilities and possible learning journey
- How any special needs will be supported

In addition the care plan will also consider:

- How information will be shared with the foster carer and local authority as well as what information is shared with whom and how it will be recorded and stored.

- What contact the child has with his/her birth parent(s) and what arrangements will be in place for supervised contact. If this is to be the setting, when, where and what form the contact will take. This will be discussed and agreed.
- What written reporting is required.
- Wherever possible and where the plan is for the child to return home, the birth parent(s) should be involved in planning.
- With the social workers agreement and as part of the plan the birth parent(s) should be involved in the settings activities that include parents, such as outings, sport's day and graduation ceremony, alongside the foster carer.

The settling in process for the child is agreed. It should be the same as any other child with the foster carer taking the place of the parent, unless otherwise agreed.

In the first two weeks after settling in the child's well being is the focus of observation, their sociability and their ability to manage their feelings with or without support.

Further observations about communication, interest and abilities will be noted to form a picture of the whole child in relation to the Early Years Foundation Stage prime and specific areas of learning and development.

Concerns about the child will be noted in the child's file and discussed with the foster carer.

If the concerns are about the foster carer's treatment of the child or abuse is suspected these are recorded in the child's file and reported to the social care worker according to the settings safeguarding child protection procedure.

Regular contact should be maintained with the social worker through planned meetings that will included the foster carer.

The transition to school will be handled sensitively. The designated person/key worker will liaise with the school, passing on relevant information and documentation with the agreement of the looked after child's birth parents.

Signed by _____

Name of signatory _____

Position _____

