

06 Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults procedures

06.08 Looked after children and previously looked after children (where appropriate)

Identification.

A 'Looked after Child' is a child in public care, who is placed with foster carers, in a residential home or with other relatives or other significant adults.

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. Acronyms such as LAC are not used when referring to a child.

Services provided to Looked After Children

Two year olds

- Places will be offered to two year old children who are looked after; where the placement in the pre-school will normally last a minimum of three months.
- Where the child is already in attendance and has a secure attachment with an existing key person a continuation of the existing place will be offered.

Three and four year olds

- Places will be offered for funded three and four year olds who are looked after; where the placement in the pre-school will normally last a minimum of six weeks.
- If a child who attends a pre-school is taken into care and is cared for by a local carer the place will continue to be made available to the child.

Additional Support

- The designated person/deputy/backup designated person and key person liaise with agencies and professionals involved with the child, and their family, and ensure appropriate information is gained and shared.
- The pre-school recognises the role of the local authority children's social care department 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 parent's or foster carer's role in relation to the pre-school, without prior discussion and agreement with the child's social worker.
- A meeting of professionals involved with the child is convened by the pre-school at the start of a placement. A Personal Education Plan (PEP) for children over 3 years old is put in place within 10 days of the child becoming looked after.
- Following this meeting, 6.8a Care plan for looked after children form is completed. The care plan is reviewed after two weeks, six weeks, three months and thereafter at three to six monthly intervals.
- The care plan needs to consider issues for the child such as:

- their emotional needs and how they are to be met
- how any emotional issues and problems that affect behaviour are to be managed
- their sense of self, culture, language(s) and identity – and how this is to be supported
- their need for sociability and friendship
- their interests and abilities and possible learning journey pathway
- 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 the ‘corporate parent’) 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 at the pre-school, when, where and what form the contact will take 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 worker’s agreement, and as part of the plan, the birth parent(s) should be involved in the pre-school’s activities that include parents/carers, such as outings and fun-days etc alongside the foster carer.
- The settling-in process for the child is agreed. It should be the same as for any other child, with the foster carer taking the place of the parent, unless otherwise agreed. It is even more important that the ‘proximity’ stage is followed until it is visible that the child has formed a sufficient relationship with their key person for them to act as a ‘secure base’ to allow the gradual separation from the foster carer. This process may take longer in some cases, so time needs to be allowed for it to take place without causing further distress or anxiety to the child.
- 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, interests 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 if abuse is suspected, these are recorded in the child’s file and reported to the child’s social care worker according to the pre-school’s safeguarding children procedure.
- Regular contact will be maintained with the social worker through planned meetings, which will include contribution to the PEP which is reviewed annually.
- The transition to school will be handled sensitively. The designated person/deputy/backup designated person and/or the child’s key person will liaise with the school, passing on relevant information and documentation with the agreement of the looked after child’s birth parents.