



CHILDREN IN CARE

CARE PLANNING, PLACEMENT AND CASE REVIEW POLICY

Children in Care: The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Policy

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1.0 Policy Statement

This policy sets out how Stoke-on-Trent City Council will carry out its responsibilities in relation to looked after children, their care planning, placement and case reviews in order to be a good corporate parent and enable the children it is responsible for to achieve their potential.

This will be achieved by producing Care Plans of a high standard which are based on a comprehensive assessment of the child and family's needs and developed in consultation with the child, the family and all professionals directly involved with the child.

This plan will be reviewed to specified timescales as part of a continuous planning process which aims to ensure that the child's welfare is safeguarded and promoted in the most effective way throughout the period that he/ she is looked after.

In addition to the regular statutory review of the care plan, the planning process will include Care Planning Meetings, to be held in between statutory reviews and which allow for the joint professional consideration of one or more of the plans which combine to form the overall care plan.

The Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) and People Directorate, Vulnerable Children and Corporate Parenting (VCCP) managers involved in the development of this policy share a commitment to working together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in care. Where IROs have concerns, issues will be resolved at the lowest level. There is a clear dispute resolution process which is followed if issues cannot be resolved.

2.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide information and guidance about the development and review of Care Plans.

It should be read in conjunction with the Permanence Policy and Care Planning Procedures and associated procedural guidance in relation to documentation, planning and review, which explains how long term planning for children in care is achieved through planning for permanence, what the options for permanence are and the steps to achieve and monitor plans to achieve legal permanence as the preferred plan for any child.

All policies and procedures are located on the Stoke-on-Trent VCCP's intranet.

3.0 Scope

This policy is for the benefit of children and young people in the care of Stoke-on-Trent City Council, including children subject to a Care Order (Sec 31 Children Act), children who are accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 and young people in secure accommodation or in custody. It also includes children who are in an adoptive placement prior to an adoption order being made and young people who have left care.

The policy is for the use of all staff involved in the delivery of services for children in care in Stoke-on-Trent.

4.0 Legal Context

The **Children Act 1989** and related guidance sets out, in relation to children who are looked after, the arrangements for care planning and the review of Care Plans. The Children Act guidance recommends that the review of a child's case should be chaired by an officer of the local authority at a more senior level than the case social worker in order to bring a degree of objectivity and oversight to the monitoring of the practice and decision making in relation to the care plan for the child.

The **Review of Children's Cases (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2004** introduced the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer. The regulations require all local authorities to have IROs in place to chair the statutory review meetings of all children in care. Additional guidance can be found in Independent Reviewing Officers Guidance (Adoption and Children Act 2002.)

IROs must, as a minimum requirement, be independent of:

- The line management of the cases they are reviewing.
- The decision making process about the allocation of financial resources to those cases.

If the Local Authority is believed to be failing in its duty to the child to the extent that the child's human rights are in danger of being breached, the IRO can ultimately refer the case to CAFCASS to make an application to the court for a judgement as to whether a child's human rights have been breached. In making this referral the IRO may also refer to the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

The **Children Leaving Care Act 2000** is the main legislation governing the provision of leaving care services. Care planning for care leavers takes place through Pathway Assessments, Plans and Reviews. Practice as outlined in this policy in relation to Care Plans applies equally to those young people whose planning for leaving care takes place within Pathway Plans and Reviews.

The **Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010** were made in March 2010 and come into force on 1st April 2011. They bring together in a single set of regulations, all the duties on local authorities for making care plans, ensuring that a child or young person is provided with accommodation which meets his or her needs and a review conducted of the child's case within specified timescales. These activities are at the heart of effective, multi-agency corporate parenting.

5.0 PART ONE - MANDATORY PROCEDURES IN RELATION TO CARE PLANS

5.1 Care Plan Contents

One of the key functions of the care plan, in addition to setting out the arrangements for how a child's needs will be met while they are in care, is to ensure that each child has a plan for permanence by the second review so that there is a clear plan for the child's future to which everyone is working.

It also includes a number of other plans which describe in more detail, the tasks and timescales to ensure that the child has every opportunity to achieve good outcomes while they remain in care:

- **Placement Plan.** This describes the everyday arrangements to care for a child (including arrangements to carry out the contact plan) which contribute to or meet the overall plan for permanence. It includes tasks in relation to identity, social presentation and self-care skills and how any needs will be met by the carer, plus arrangements for additional support to the child and the carer. It is replaced by the Adoption Support Plan where a child is matched for adoption.
- **Health Care Plan.** This includes information about the physical, emotional and behavioural development of the child, and how the health care plan will meet any identified needs.
- **Personal Education Plan.** This describes what leisure activities, out of school activities and specific academic support the child needs to achieve their potential up to and including further/higher education, training and employment.
- **Pathway Plan (if young person is 16 and 3 months of age)** which identifies what actions are needed to ensure that the young person acquires the skills and has the support necessary to make a positive transition to adulthood.
- **Education Pathway Plan.** This sits alongside the Pathway Plan and ensures that the young person has a clear pathway to maintain education, employment and training into adulthood

The content of the Care Plan draws on the Placement Information Record and Chronology and confirms that all the assessments/information which contribute to a good care plan have been carried out.

It recognises the importance of a contact plan with significant adults and siblings/friends to achieving any plan for permanence and it contains whatever contact plan has been agreed to support the overall care plan. It also recognises the importance of family and professionals all agreeing to do their part to support the care plan, and details about who was consulted are included in this part.

It goes on to outline out how the child's needs will be met during the period they are looked after and which must clearly relate to achieving objectives within the permanence plan - to either achieve legal permanence, or if the child is remaining in care, to achieve stability of care placement and school placement. It will describe how responsibilities are delegated so that carers, health professionals and education professionals in particular, are clear about what their own plan is to support the overall permanence plan and achieve good outcomes. As new information is assessed, each of these plans may be amended as appropriate.

Areas to be covered within the Care Plan

Family and Social Relationships (Identity)

This section comes first to emphasise the importance of identity to a child who may leave, although temporarily, the family and community which define them. They need to retain information and knowledge about this if they do not return and they need to develop a positive self concept and self esteem about who they are. Most of the actions to address identity will be contained within the Placement Plan, or within the Health Care Plan or PEP, and this section should act as an aide memoir to check that there are no other actions, e.g. specific life-story work which the social worker will need to carry out.

Birth Family (Parental Capacity/Family and Environmental Factors)

This section is not specifically about the child's needs, but it comes next to emphasise the importance the impact that significant changes in the birth family and extended family have on the contact plan or overall plan for permanence.

A family may have needs which will have to be met for rehabilitation to be considered e.g. referral to adult mental health services, parenting classes, re-housing. Changes in the birth family structure like a new baby or new partner may change the commitment to maintain a relationship with this child through contact, and open the way to consideration of legal permanence outside the birth family.

Where a child is in long term foster care with little or no contact, or an adoption placement, changes in this family situation will also have an impact and should be described here for their impact on contact or the overall plan.

It will also be this section which contains information on the birth family which indicates whether the child still needs protection through the continuation of a Child Protection Plan.

Family and Social Relationships (Contact)

This section details the reasons why any changes in the Contact Plan may be needed and agreed as part of Part 1 of the Care Plan, at the Statutory Review (including as a result of changes in the birth family as above). Such changes would require actions such as changing the Placement Plan to reflect new contact arrangements.

It also describes what actions will be taken to meet the child's need to create relationships, maybe friendships within the community through informal activities. Again, this may only be a reference to a need which relates to actions for the carers, contained within the Placement Plan, but may also be an action for them or the social worker in the PEP, in relation to extended school activities.

Child/Young Person's Developmental Needs (physical/emotional/behavioural)

This section should be completed if the review is held without a health plan being available or to summarise new needs identified since the last plan was reviewed.

Specific and detailed statutory guidance on Promoting Health and Wellbeing of Looked After Children was issued in November 2009 which details new duties on Local authorities and

PCT's in relation to contributing to the child's care plan through a high quality Health Care Plan.

A good standard of Health Care Plan, developed in partnership with providers of health services (including CAMHS and Drug and Alcohol services) should be sufficient to identify the child's needs and actions to meet them.

Again, carers or schools may have specific tasks to undertake in respect of meeting specific emotional wellbeing or behavioural needs, in which case, this section would make reference to specific tasks in the Placement Plan or PEP.

Personal Education Plan

This section should be completed if the first review is held so early within the first month, that it is unrealistic to expect a PEP to be available, or to summarise new needs identified since the PEP was reviewed.

There is specific and detailed statutory guidance on the duty and responsibilities of Designated Teachers and Virtual Heads to co-operate with the Local Authority in order to promote both the enjoyment of school and the identification and promotion of aspiration as well as achievement.

A good standard of PEP, developed in partnership with a child's school should be sufficient to identify the child's needs and actions to meet them.

Again, carers or health professionals like CAMHS services may have specific tasks to undertake in respect of meeting specific emotional wellbeing or behavioural needs to raise self esteem as a foundation for aspiration, in which case, this section would make reference to specific tasks in the Placement Plan or Health Care Plan.

Child/Young Persons Developmental Needs (Social Presentation and Self Care Skills)

It is expected that this section will mainly reference the Pathway Plan and/or Placement Plan which will detail how young people are being helped to prepare themselves for a life without the support and supervision of carers. Again, most needs will have been identified within these other plans.

Corporate Parenting Capacity/Environmental factors

This section includes the actions which the local authority or its partners need to take to support the overall care plan.

This section is reserved for those actions which are crucial to meet the overall objectives of the care plan e.g. care proceedings or SGO application or may require a re-allocation of human or financial resources in order to meet this child's needs. As such the Local Authority or its partners will have to consider whether budgeted resources can meet this child's identified needs, and if not, what will be done to meet them to the satisfaction of the IRO.

As such, any action in this section will automatically be regarded as a starred recommendation to be considered at Strategic Manager level and will be contained within the

Starred Recommendations Ratification Form and sent to the Principal Manager (copy to Strategic Manager).

5.2 Care Plan Standards

It is the second statutory review which is held within 4 months of the child coming into care, which agrees the permanence plan for the child. The care plan presented to this review is critical and standards will be monitored by the child's IRO, to ensure that it is of a good quality.

5.3 When the Care Plan will be completed

For all planned placements a multi-agency care planning meeting will take place prior to the placement being made. This should involve parents, all professionals involved with the child and the proposed foster carer's social worker. The meeting should be chaired by a Practice or Principal Manager. A Care Plan will be completed by the social worker based on decisions made at this meeting before the child/young person starts to be looked after.

If this is not practicable, the Care Plan will be completed within 10 days of the start of the first placement following a multi-agency care planning meeting.

Where the local authority is seeking a court order, for example a Care Order, the court will require a Care Plan in accordance with the Children Act 1989.

5.4 Authorising the Care Plan

The Practice Manager has overall responsibility for its completion, content and adherence to the Permanence and Care Planning Policy.

5.5 Addressing Permanence within the Care Plan (Ref: Permanence Policy and Care Planning Procedures)

A plan for permanence is the planning that gives a child emotional, physical and legal permanence and must be in place by the time of the second statutory review which takes place four months after a child has come into care.

As the Practice Manager must authorise the Care Plan to ratify its contents and to attest to the standards of its completion, it is their responsibility to ensure that between the first and second statutory review a multi-agency Care Planning Meeting is with the explicit purpose of:

- Developing a plan for legal permanence; or
- For children/young people for whom this is not possible, or in their best interests, to plan for their future in foster care or residential care either as a long term placement or as preparation for independence; or
- Ensuring that a rehabilitation plan is appropriately progressed in a timely way.

The Permanence Plan is not a separate document - it is incorporated within Part 1 of the Care Plan. If this document is fully completed to the standards set out in Appendix 1, it will meet the requirements of a Permanence Plan.

5.6 Changing a Care Plan

Changes to the overall Care Plan can only be made at a statutory review meeting. The purpose of the review meeting is to ratify any proposed changes. If the changes proposed are required prior to the arranged date of the next scheduled statutory review, this may mean that the planned review date is brought forward. The review meeting ensures that all important parties are aware of and understand the nature of the change to the plan. This allows for discussion about the change of plan to be recorded in a way that makes the decision making process transparent.

The social worker will consult with all those involved in the care plan before making the changes and should discuss the proposed changes in supervision with their Practice Manager, then present the proposed changes at the review meeting. It is expected that the changes will be presented as a proposed care plan, which is then ratified or amended and signed at the meeting.

6.0 Practice Guidance on Care Plans

6.1 Sharing the Care Plan with children/young people

Wherever possible, children and young people are fully consulted in the development of their Care Plan and the 'finished product' is fully shared with them. Even a child as young as 6 years old, if they have reached the developmental milestones expected for that age, can be fully engaged and informed by translating the issues into plain language according to their level of understanding.

A social worker working with a very young child or a young person with complex disabilities/communication difficulties should make sure their records show that they have explicitly considered how to consult the child or communicate things from their perspective. Genuine efforts to consult with a child should be clearly acknowledged by the IRO.

In such cases, before the review meeting, the social worker should discuss and clarify with the IRO what form of consultation will be undertaken, who by and how it will be presented back to the review meeting.

6.2 The relationship between the Care Plan and Placement decisions

All placement decisions are subject to the duty to ensure that it is the most appropriate way to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.

Rehabilitation should be seen as a general duty, followed by preference of placement with a friend or relative approved as a foster carer, followed by placement with a local authority foster carer with no previous relationship with the child.

As far as reasonably practicable, the placement should be near to the child's home, enabling continuity of education, enabling them to live with a sibling who is also looked after and suitable if the child or young person is disabled.

Emergency regulations exist to facilitate the placement of a child with friends or relatives who are not approved as foster carers (connected persons) for up to 6 weeks before foster carer approval is required. A Placement Plan is required in these circumstances.

Where the plan is for the child to remain at home following the granting of an ICO, by making this a placement, or to place a child on a care order back at home, existing Placement with Parents Regulations apply. A Placement Plan is required in these circumstances.

The Strategic Manager, Children in Care will agree any placement move which will necessitate disrupting an education placement in school years 10 and 11 (KS4), or will involve a care placement out of the authority (unless it is with Stoke-on-Trent approved foster carer).

The assessment of a child's needs to inform their care plan or pathway plan may conclude that these needs will be met by a placement in 'other arrangements' - which are not regulated under the Care Standards Act 2000 or by Ofsted e.g. an eligible child maybe placed in supported lodgings or in supported accommodation.

The assessment of whether the placement is suitable will include the young person's wishes and feelings, the impact on their EET potential, the suitability of the provider and any health and safety requirements, if rented accommodation. Such a move is a significant change to a young persons care plan and should only take place following careful planning which will have been scrutinised at a young persons review meeting. A Placement Plan will be required.

6.3 The relationship between the Care Plan and the Placement Plan or Adoption Support Plan

When a suitable placement has been identified for the child, the placement plan will set out in detail how the day to day parenting tasks will be shared between the child's carer (or supported accommodation provider) and the authority, including clarity about financial arrangements and is required within 5 working days of the start of the placement, if it has not been practicable to make one before. It is replaced by the Adoption Support Plan when a child is placed for adoption.

Where the care plan is for a series of pre-planned short-term placements, for example a child/young person with disabilities, this will be treated as a single placement, requiring one placement plan as long as the respite care is with one carer/residential facility.

The maximum number of days allowed currently in any 12 month period is 120 days. The first review must take place within 3 months of the commencement date of the series of placements, and thereafter at six monthly intervals.

Whereas, the Care Plan helps the social worker records ***long-term arrangements for a child/young person's future*** and the actions to secure that future, the Placement Plan supports ***arrangements for a child/young person's day-to-day care in a particular placement***. If a child/young person changes placement the Placement Plan will change, but the Care Plan might stay the same if that move was part of an agreed plan or contingency arrangement. It also contains the details of the child's contact plan, and as such, details the underpinning arrangements for a child to maintain contact with important people in their lives as part of the assessment for permanence, or to maintain achieve a permanence plan.

The main focus of Review Meetings is to review the Care Plan, not the details within the Placement Plan, which can be changed by convening a care planning meeting to discuss and change its content.

6.4 The relationship between the Care Plan and a Child Protection Plan

In most cases where a child who is subject to a child protection plan becomes looked after, it will no longer be necessary to maintain the child protection plan. There will be a relatively few cases where safeguarding issues remain e.g. where an ICO is obtained and the child remains at home, placed with parents or where a young person's behaviour is likely to result in significant harm to themselves or others. It is expected that there will be an aligned planning and review process, led by the IRO which meets both care planning and Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance, which includes an early first review so that the child protection plan is also reviewed at an early stage. This may lead to the child protection plan ending as the child's placement plan provides them with sufficient protection, or a new plan which forms part of the care plan until no actions are needed to protect the child, other than those contained in other plans e.g. contact section of Placement Plan.

6.5 The relationship between the Care Plan and the Personal Education Plan

A Personal Education Plan (PEP) is required for all children when they come into care, which is reviewed at minimum intervals of six months. Whilst a separate document, it forms the 'education' section of the Care Plan.

Statutory Guidance gives Designated Teachers and social workers joint responsibility to ensure that there is an up-to-date and effective PEP in place and to promote achievement in its widest sense.

The PEP is currently reviewed outside of a statutory review meeting but after its completion and following each PEP review it is accessed by the IRO so that a statutory review of the Care Plan can consider the PEP as part of the overall care plan, to ensure the educational needs of the child are fully addressed.

A version of it should be developed and available for the first statutory review and if not, the care plan should detail the actions that will be taken to ensure one is available.

Where the child has LDD, the PEP completed in Year 9 will include reference to the outcome of the transition assessment (TAF1) to ensure a seamless early alert and coordinated intervention from VCCP/ASC&P in relation to the child's access to adult pathways to services to meet their need.

6.6 The relationship between the Care Plan and the Health Care Plan

A Health Care Plan is required for all children when they come into care, which is reviewed at minimum intervals of 12 months. Whilst a separate document, it forms the health section of the Care Plan and a written report should be available for the first review, or tasks to achieve this should be written into the care plan to ensure one is available.

Statutory guidance for local authorities on Promoting the Health and Wellbeing of Looked After Children issued in November 2009 makes it clear that health needs include emotional

health as well as physical health, and promotes the inclusion of actions to improve emotional wellbeing within the Health Plan.

Although it is the responsibility of the local authority to ensure there is an up to date Health Care Plan to inform the care planning process, it is now the duty of the Primary Care Trust to work in partnership to achieve a successful plan. This means that an appropriately trained health professional completes the Health Care Plan.

In the absence of a Designated Doctor and Designated Nurse role locally, the Medical Advisor and Named Nurse have a strategic responsibility for both the completion and the quality of these plans.

The Health Care Plan is currently reviewed outside of a Review meeting but after completion it is accessed by the child's IRO so that the child's health needs can be considered within a statutory review as part of the overall care plan.

6.7 The relationship between the Care Plan and the Pathway Plan

Ref: Leaving Care Policies and Procedures

The Pathway Plan sets out the needs of a young person leaving care and how these will be met. All looked after young people must have a Pathway Plan in place within 3 months of the young person's 16th birthday

The Pathway Plan is currently reviewed outside of a Review meeting but after completion, is accessed by the child's IRO so that a statutory review can consider the Pathway Plan as part of the overall care plan, ensuring that further/higher education, training and employment needs are part of a transition plan to achieve independence.

When a young person of 16 or 17 leaves care the Pathway Plan replaces the Care Plan as the overarching planning tool to set objectives to plan for independence. Reviews are chaired by the Next Steps Team Practice Manager until the young person is 18 years old

6.8 The role of Independent Visitors within care planning

The appointment of an independent visitor should be regarded as part of the development of the care plan or as part of the review of a child's case. The local authority has a duty to appoint a person to be a child's independent visitor where it appears to them that the child's communication with a parent figure is infrequent or it appears to be in the child's best interests to have such an independent figure in their lives. Their role is not that of an advocate, but to visit, advise and befriend the child.

7.0 PART TWO - PROCEDURES IN RELATION TO STATUTORY REVIEWS

7.1 The purpose of a Child in Care Statutory Review Meeting

The review of the care plan is the fourth component in the cycle of assessment, planning, intervention and review, with a purpose of monitoring the progress of achieving outcomes set out in the care plan (including other professional plans) and making decisions to amend the overall plan as necessary in light of changed information and circumstance.

Care Planning meetings are not a part of the review process, but gather information for the purposes of assessment and planning - producing outcomes which will be considered in an amended care plan at the review, or may indicate the need for an earlier review if indicating a change to the overall permanence plan is required.

Although the review will require consideration of any changes in day to day arrangements which may affect the overall Care Plan, its purpose is not to make day to day those arrangements (which is the role of the Placement Plan). Any issues about carers carrying out their agreed responsibilities within such a plan should be considered outside of the review and if no resolution can be found, individuals should be referred to the complaints procedure.

7.2 Role of the Independent Reviewing Officer

The IRO appointed for the child is responsible for monitoring the performance of the authority's functions in relation to the child's case. The intention is to enable the IRO to have an effective and independent oversight of the child's case to ensure that the care plan represents an effective response to the assessed needs of the child and progress is being made towards achieving the identified outcomes.

This includes:

- Ensuring that care plan has met quality standards.
- Identifying gaps in the assessment process or provision of service.
- Offering a safeguard to prevent any 'drift' in care planning and the delivery of services.
- Monitoring the activity of the local authority as a good corporate parent - child focused in all its activities.
- Making sure the child understands their rights and how an advocate could help them.

The IRO must ensure that the people responsible for implementing decisions taken in consequence of the review are identified, and that where decisions are not implemented as a consequence of the review, the dispute resolution process is followed.

However, changes to Care Plans may occur without notice (e.g. placement breakdowns) or cannot wait until a review is held (e.g. removal from a placement where a risk of significant harm is evident). In such situations, the social worker should notify the IRO of the change by e-mail, with brief details, and the IRO will discuss this with the Social worker if they feel it necessary to seek clarification of events. An early review will then be scheduled to consider and ratify any changes to the Care Plan.

7.3 Role of the Social Worker in between reviews

The social worker must keep the IRO informed of a significant change/event in the child's life. In that situation, the social worker will forward minutes of Care Planning Meetings to the IRO where appropriate e.g. if a plan for adoption is to change to a plan for long term fostering because an adoption placement has not been found within timescales.

The social worker is also responsible for informing the IRO if significant changes occur which impact significantly on the Care Plan e.g. unsupervised contact is stopped because of a Child Protection incident and a plan for rehabilitation is terminated.

7.4 Role of the Social Worker to consult before a review

A review must be child centred and the placement planning meeting will plan how consultation and participation in reviews will best be achieved for each child. Discussion should take place between the social worker and the child at least 20 working days before the meeting about who the child would like to attend the meeting and where it will be held.

It is not supportive of children, parents or carers to use a Review Meeting to try and address issues which have not been discussed with children beforehand and which raise anxiety. Examples would be where new information is brought to the Review Meeting without the child, parent or carer knowing about that issue, or issues around contact with people who would place children at risk. Where possible, the social worker and IRO will work towards resolving contentious issues before the Review Meeting, or if this is not possible, ensure that all participants are appropriately equipped with the right information so that the Review Meeting can be used positively and appropriately.

If the child or young person is not attending their review, the social worker must ensure that the child's views are obtained and presented to the review meeting in whatever format is most appropriate.

The IRO will speak with the child/young person privately before the meeting about the matters to be considered unless they refuse or it is inappropriate given their age and level of understanding.

7.5 Role of the Social Worker to prepare for a review

In preparation for all reviews the social worker should consider:

- Proposed invitees.
- Progress of the case since the last review.
- Content of written reports (updated plans) to be available to the review.
- Any other relevant information.

A multi-agency Care Planning Meeting achieves this preparation in the most effective way, as well as providing a forum for consultation, and its outcomes can be incorporated in to the Review Social Workers Report.

In addition, the Social Worker will:

- Prepare the child/young person for their Review Meeting by consulting with them about the contents of their report, according to age and understanding.

- Prepare their parent/carers for their Review Meeting by consulting with them about the contents of their report.
- Provide assistance for the child/young person and/or parents in completing the consultation papers if they should request this and any support needed to facilitate the child's participation in the review which may include support from an advocate.

And ensure that the following plans are updated so that they can be accessed by the IRO 3 days before the statutory review:

- The Care Plan (incorporating any new needs which their social work report identifies). This will include updated information pulled through from Placement Information Record (parts 1 and 2) and Background Information and Chronology (ICS).
- Court Care Plan (if child on ICO).
- Child Protection Plan (if relevant).
- Placement Plan (or Adoption Support Plan from date child matched for placement) which supports the permanence plan and other plans to promote the child's health and education.
- Personal Education Plan.
- Health Care Plan.
- Pathway Plan (if young person aged 16 and 3 months or over).

7.6 Role of the Principal and Practice Manager

Case management responsibility for decisions and actions in respect of the child always lies with the social worker and Practice Manager. Responsibility for line management of the social worker or management of the case is not part of the IRO's function.

The Practice Manager will oversee the progress of the Care Plan through regular pod meetings. The Principal Manager has a key responsibility to ensure that the Permanence Policy and Care Planning procedures are followed in order to meet performance targets. They also have a key role in ensuring that systems are in place to enable care plans to be achieved.

7.7 Documentation to initiate a Review Process

When a child comes into care, the social worker is responsible for completing Form 903 within one working day. A copy of this form must be sent to the Conference & Review Unit and constitutes formal notification to the Unit that a young person has come into care.

On receipt of a Form 903 the Conference and Review Unit will arrange the date for the first review in conjunction with the social worker and carer.

7.8 Conference and Review Unit: Preparation for all reviews

Invitation letters will be sent out from the Conference and Review Unit, checking first with the social worker to whom they should be sent.

Consultation forms will be distributed by the Conference and Review Unit to the child/young person, parent/persons with Parental Responsibility, foster carer/residential worker, prospective adopter (where appropriate). Assistance for the child/young person and/or

parents in completing the consultation papers may need to be provided by the social worker or any other suitable professional.

If parents are not involved directly in reviews either because of their own circumstances or because of the child's circumstances e.g. placed for adoption, their views should still be obtained while they retain parental responsibility through consultation documents and they should receive appropriate feedback from the review.

The forms should be returned to the Conference and Review Unit prior to the Review to assist the IRO in preparing a relevant agenda.

7.9 Participants

The child/young person should always be consulted by the social worker as to who they want to be at their review. In the majority of cases participants will be:

- The child. There is a presumption that the child will be fully involved, limited only by his/her age and understanding.
- Parents. There is a presumption that parents will be fully involved, limited only by the paramountcy of the child's welfare. In situations where there is a conflict of interests between parents and child, it may sometimes be necessary for parents to attend reviews separately from the child.
- Social worker.
- Foster/residential carer.
- Prospective adoptive parent until Adoption Order is granted.
- Chairperson.
- The adoption/fostering supervising or support worker.
- Advocate if requested.

Other possible participants should be considered as appropriate in the circumstances (e.g. health visitor, GP, teacher, previous carer or any other involved and supportive adult).

The social worker will ensure that the child/young person knows that they can have support to attend the meetings if they want, from someone they already know, or an advocate.

7.10 Timing of Review Meetings

The Conference and Review Unit will maintain a reminder system to ensure reviews take place in a timely fashion.

The following are the minimum standards implemented by Stoke-on-Trent City Council. The standards are set out in the **Review of Children's Cases Regulations 1991** as amended by **The Review of Children's Cases (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2004**.

- Each case must first be reviewed within **four weeks (20 working days)** of the date on which the child comes into care.
- The second review must be carried out no more than **three months** after the first review.

- Subsequent reviews must be carried out no more than **six months** after the date of the previous review and a date must be arranged for the review to ideally take place at 5 months.
- Within 4 weeks of a change in placement. Subsequent reviews will then take place within timescales dating from this review as though it was the first 4 week review.
- At any time when there has been a change in circumstances that may affect the overall aim of the Care Plan or the timescales applying to achieving the Care Plan e.g. family member offers a permanent placement to a child in long term foster care or removal from a placement where there is a risk of significant harm.
- When requested by the child/young person, parent/carer(s) and/or any other significant person.
- If the IRO requests.
- Before a decision to discharge a child from S20 accommodation unless that was the overall plan being followed.
- Before discharge from a secure training centre/youth offenders institute.
- Where the child is placed in another authority (known as Out of City Placement).

Where the plan for a child/young person is adoption, please refer to adoption policy/procedures for additional mandatory procedures on the timescales for review meetings.

7.11 Bringing Forward Review Meetings

The frequency of reviews in 7.9 above is the minimum standard and a review should take place as often as the circumstances require. If the need arises for substantial changes to the Care Plan then the date of the next review should be brought forward.

7.12 Postponement of Review Meetings

Consideration will only be given to re-arranging a review after discussion between the child/young person's social worker, Principal/Practice Manager and the IRO and **will only be agreed if the new date is within the statutory timescale**. If a proposed date is outside the statutory timescale, permission must be given by a Strategic Manager.

Where the allocated social worker is ill or not available for a scheduled review, it is the responsibility of the social worker's Practice Manager to enable another member of the social work pod who has knowledge of the child to attend.

Where the foster home is the venue for the review and the foster carer is ill on the scheduled date, the review must go ahead as planned but at another venue and the foster carer's supervising social worker should attend to provide information about the placement.

If an older child/young person who is expected to attend is ill or unable to attend due to another important/unavoidable commitment, the review should wherever possible be rescheduled within the required statutory time-scale.

Should the child/young person not attend as agreed/expected, the review must go ahead as planned and the IRO must advise the child/young person in writing of the outcome and offer a **face-to-face meeting** with themselves and/or the social worker to explain the recommendations and hear any representations from the child/young person. In the light of

any representations from the child/young person, the IRO may make amendments to the recommended plan following consultation with key members of the review by phone or in writing.

If a parent/carer or significant family member who should be present is unable to attend, the review should go ahead but every effort should be made by the child/young person's social worker to seek their views in advance of the meeting.

In the absence of the IRO, the Conference and Review manager will identify an appropriate chair.

7.13 The Review Meeting Agenda

The purpose of the review meeting is to consider the plan for the welfare of the child and then to monitor the progress of the plan, making decisions to amend the plan as necessary.

The date for the next review will be set at the end of the Meeting.

7.14 The role of the Statutory Review in Permanence Planning

At the **first Review Meeting** the plan for the welfare of the child is examined and the initial Care Plan is confirmed, with or without amendments.

The central focus of the **second Review Meeting** will be to review the Care Plan and confirm that there is now a clear permanence plan incorporated within it, with timescales and a contingency plan, so that it is clear when the contingency plan would be implemented.

For children looked after under S20 Children Act 1989, it is particularly important to set specific timescales, e.g. by the time of the next review, so that this next review can consider the contingency plan if rehabilitation has not been achieved.

For children in care proceedings, it is likely that rehabilitation will be given a timescale of the duration of the court proceedings.

At the **third Review Meeting**, for children looked after under S20, if the permanence plan has not progressed as stated in the Care Plan, then the review meeting must establish whether the lack of progress is as a result of drift or whether there are specific circumstances leading to the delay. In either case, the review must then consider what actions need to be taken to implement the Care Plan in a timely manner or whether the preferred plan for permanence cannot be implemented and what actions are then needed to implement the contingency plan.

If rehabilitation has not been successful, the review should consider whether:

- There are factors which indicate the child can expect to be returning to a changed home environment.
- The resilience of the child is sufficiently robust to indicate that a further attempt at rehabilitation is in the child's best interests.

If there are no indications of the possibility of a second successful attempt at rehabilitation, there should be no further attempt at rehabilitation and the review will then consider what actions are needed to implement the contingency plan.

This approach responds to research about children's timescales and about the damaging effects of drifting in the care system.

In care proceedings, if assessment for rehabilitation is negative each review should consider how much of the contingency plan contained within the care plan can be actioned e.g. at a minimum, this will be preparation of the CPR where adoption is the contingency plan.

Where the plan for a child/young person is adoption, please refer to the Adoption Policy and Procedures for additional mandatory procedures and practice guidance on the content of review meetings.

7.15 After the Review Meeting

The IRO will make a written record of the meeting, including decisions and recommendations, naming individuals responsible for actions and the timescales applying to them. The record of the review is sent to all review participants no later than 14 calendar days after the review has been held.

The IRO role is not case management and they carry no responsibility for line management of the social worker or case decision making.

Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations are clear that decisions are made or ratified within reviews, and it is the responsibility of the local authority to make arrangements to carry these out.

Any recommendations/proposed changes should then be considered by the social worker in pod meetings. The IRO may also discuss the decisions following the review with the Principal/Practice Manager who holds case management responsibility (See section on starred recommendations)

What all must keep in mind however, is the difference between day to day decision making which is the remit of care planning supervised by the social workers Principal/Practice Manager and those matters which, if not planned effectively, will impact on the overall Care Plan. For instance, it is not appropriate for a review to make a decision about the practical arrangements to make supervision happen, but it is appropriate for a review to make a decision that contact (as specified in the contact agreement which is part of a rehabilitation plan, assessment for permanence plan, or a matched long term placement) should take place.

Where a review decision was made that the Care Plan should be revised or updated, the social worker is responsible for circulating the amended Care Plan to all key parties for consideration and signature. Where the IRO has not been able to access an updated Care Plan within 28 days of the date of the Review, the IRO will immediately raise this with the Practice Manager and they will make an agreement as to when the new Care Plan will be written and circulated.

Where a Review Meeting has included decisions about plans for a child to be adopted, please refer to the Adoption Policy and Procedures for details of ensuing duties and actions.

7.16 Information sharing in between Reviews

The IROs will have access to the child's files on CareFirst. The child's social worker or their Practice Manager will alert the IRO if there are any significant changes to the child's Care Plan as in 7.2 above.

7.17 Problem Resolution

This policy incorporates processes and guidance that have been identified as contributing to problem prevention and resolution.

It also incorporates a commitment to ensuring that review recommendations are robustly followed by making sure that Principal Managers (and Strategic Managers if necessary) are alerted to those recommendations that are critical to progressing the plan, immediately after the review, so that they can agree to pursue the recommendation within timescale and take monitoring action to ensure that it is completed.

This procedure is designed to reduce the number of occasions when failure to achieve a recommendation triggers the dispute resolution process.

The development of this policy has been informed by the agreement that where IROs have concerns, they will endeavour to resolve issues at the lowest level.

It is important that the Statutory Review is not used as a problem solving forum for all matters of day to day care planning in which there is disagreement, and for IROs to direct complainants to the social worker or their manager. It is those problems which have a direct impact on the child's Care Plan e.g. failure to carry out an action from the last review, which are the concern of the IRO. In these cases the action the IRO will take is:

- Wherever possible the IRO will attempt to resolve a problem concerning the child's care by negotiation, including contacting the social worker responsible for the child and seeking a solution.
- If the IRO has some concerns around a case that have not been resolved through discussion with the Social worker, they will discuss this with the Principal/Practice Manager.
- In circumstances where it is felt that informal enquiries or discussion would help to bring clarity and an early resolution, the IRO may wish to contact the Strategic Manager for CIC.

7.18 Starred Recommendations

The purpose of having starred recommendations in a review is to highlight those recommendations that are crucial to the care plan and for these recommendations to be agreed quickly at the level of management that is able to ensure/facilitate their completion. They include:

- Implementation of significant action within the Care Plan e.g. application for discharge of Care Order; completion of documentation such as the Child's Permanence Report;

initiating arrangements for a suitable school placement or education support needed to improve attainment.

- Accessing essential services e.g. referral for specialist CAMHS services, Children's Rights, Advocate, a stable placement which can meet health and education needs.
- Addressing poor practice in respect of statutory responsibilities e.g. fulfilling statutory visiting requirements, documentation completion.

The conclusion of the review will include an agreement about which recommendations are regarded as starred recommendations will be sent immediately by the IRO by e-mail to the social worker's Principal Manager and to the Strategic Manager for information. If the Strategic Manager has concerns about the starred recommendations, he/she will discuss the concerns with the Principal Manager within 5 working days of receipt of the recommendations.

There is then 5 days for communication between the manager and IRO to agree .or change the recommendation, evidenced by the e-mailed return of the signed agreement form to the child's IRO. The Review of Arrangements Form/Review of Placement Social workers Report (ICS) will then be distributed by the Conference and Review Unit to participants within fifteen working days of the Meeting, including the confirmed or amended starred recommendations.

If the Principal Manager does not agree with the starred recommendations, and no agreement is reached within 10 working days of notification of disputed recommendations, the IRO will register the dispute and will follow the dispute resolution process.

If the recommendation is one that is outside the authority of the Principal Manager e.g. making or continuing a stable Out of City placement that can meet health and education needs then the recommendation will be sent to the Strategic Manager.

The Principal Manager will monitor the required starred actions to ensure their completion.

7.19 Dispute Resolution Process

If the IRO is of the opinion that the management and review of the child's case has not been completed to the standards required by the Regulations; or that Children & Young People's Services are failing to properly implement the child's Care Plan, having followed all internal procedures described in 7.16 they will implement the Resolution Process. See Dispute Resolution flowchart

CAFCASS will make a decision about whether to proceed with the case in the courts within 14 days of referral.

8.0 Children ceasing to be looked after

8.1 Young people who are looked after and are in prison

Young people subject to a Care Order and receiving a custodial sentence (i.e. in a Secure Training Centre, Young Offenders Institution or prison) remain looked after children and 'eligible' as defined in the Children Leaving Care Act 2000. IROs will continue to chair reviews of their Care Plans, including checking plans for after their release.

8.2 Return Home of a S20 accommodated child/young person

In a case of short notice where planning is not possible, the social worker should:

- Respect the parents right to request a return home however sudden, if the parent has Parental Responsibility and the child is accommodated on a voluntary basis (CA Sec20), having considered whether there are any child protection issues.
- Inform the IRO, sharing information on the significant change.
- Record their discussion with the IRO.
- Offer the child and parents the opportunity to develop a CIN plan to support return home e.g. through stepped down services.

Where there is time to plan:

- A review should be held in order to ensure that a CIN plan is drawn up which includes all agencies concerned so that they appreciate their roles and responsibilities when the child is no longer looked after and support and services are provided to ensure that return home is successful.

8.3 Sudden Return Home of a child, young person on a Care Order

Most returns home of a child/young person on a Care Order will be made in a planned way. However there are occasions when a child/young person will make this decision for themselves, or a placement breaks down and the least traumatic move is for them to be placed with a parent.

In this circumstance the social worker in consultation with the Principal/Practice Manager must decide whether it is safe and/or appropriate for the child/young person to remain at home. If it is not considered safe or appropriate action must be taken to return the child/young person to their placement or another place of safety.

If it is decided that it is safe and appropriate for the child/young person to be the Social worker should:

- Inform the IRO, sharing information on the significant change.
- Record their discussion with the IRO.
- Meet Placement at Home Regulations before agreeing the placement.
- Hold a Planning Meeting with the family to develop the Care Plan and Placement Plan for the new placement.
- Arrange a statutory review within 4 weeks of the change of placement.

NB: A child/young person at home on a Care Order remains a Child in Care and all statutory responsibilities must be undertaken in respect of them.

8.4 Eligible children - Looked After and aged 16 or 17 (in care on 16th birthday for at least 13 weeks before)

These care experienced young people are eligible for the full support that comes from being looked after and the social worker must carry out the functions of a personal advisor.

No eligible child should move from accommodation that is regulated under the Care Standards Act 2000 to other arrangements without a statutory review of his/her care plan.

9.0 Monitoring and Review of the Policy

The Conference and Review Service Manager will use information from the monitoring forms and other available data to provide an annual report to the Corporate Parenting Panel.

The annual report will identify good practice by individuals or teams, areas where action is needed, and will highlight issues for further development.