

Protocol for High Risk Children Looked After or Becoming Looked after who are placed with parents whilst awaiting foster care or residential placements.

Introduction:

Children's Services across London and England may at times have a small number of children and adolescents who may need to come into care or who are already Looked After by the Local Authority and are in need of another placement which cannot be sourced. These children can also present with some highly complex and challenging needs, where families or care providers are no longer able to continue to look after them in their foster homes or residential placements. For these children a placement breakdown is a time in their lives where they experience uncertainty, upheaval and a form of rejection, which can trigger a response from them which is seen as challenging and difficult for their care givers. Unfortunately for some children who experience a placement breakdown, they are unable to remain in their placements while an alternative appropriate placement is identified and so these children may remain at home, or need to be temporarily placed back at home with their parents while the Placements service tries to find a placement that safeguards them.

Some of these children may be a risk of Child Criminal Exploitation, Serious Youth Violence or Child Sexual Exploitation and they are likely to be known to the police and to other agencies due to the contextual safeguarding risks and missing episodes. When these children are placed at home they need the highest level of scrutiny to ensure that services are co-ordinated and that they are safe from harm with a robust multi-agency plan monitoring and reducing risk.

Where children are placed at home, multi- agency services should be co-ordinated with the team around the child ensuring that there is a clear multi-agency assessment in place and a robust plan which are effectively managed by the partnership. Due to the level or risk that is likely to be present for these children Senior Leaders in the Council and across the partnership should have oversight and scrutiny of the plan with clear and evident challenges of assessments and plans, where needed, to reduce risk.

Who does this protocol apply to?

- Any Looked after Children under the age of 18 years old and are the subjects of Interim Care Orders, Looked after voluntarily under a Section 20 Agreement or Remanded to the Care of the Local Authority and placed with their parent(s). The Placement Service are not able to identify an interim foster or residential placement while a placement search is being undertaken.
- Any child for whom the Becoming Looked after Process is in place but they are not yet Looked After because a placement cannot be identified.
- Children who are known to the Missing and Exploitation Team and are assessed as level 2-3 on the risk hazard for Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Criminal Child Exploitation (CCE) and Serious Youth Violence.

Roles and Responsibilities;

For children waiting to Become Looked After

- If within 10 days of ACRP decision that care proceedings should be initiated, if the placement service are not able to identify a placement for a child at home, and an application for an interim care order is delayed due to no placement being identified, the Practice manager or Team manager must notify the Service Manager and the safety plan and risk assessment should be updated. A review Strategy meeting is held and chaired by the missing and exploitation team practitioner.
- The Strategy Meeting will identify any safeguarding risks, and coordinate the details of any other vulnerable children in the area, and to share any significant intel with police, CSC, health and other relevant professionals involved, including foster carer/key worker where appropriate. Police and LA checks are completed.

For children already Looked After

- Once notification is given that the placement is ending, or at risk of ending the team manager should ensure that the Practice Manager and Social Worker have notified the Placements service and a placement request has been raised.
- If the Placement Service have notified the social work team that a placement cannot be found, and no other placements are available, within 3 Working days of notification being given the relevant Service Manager must inform the Head of Service that no alternative placement is available and a child may need to be placed at home, while a placement is sought. The Head of Service will seek agreement to place the child at home from the Director of Safeguarding.
- Detailed placement at home with parents regulations assessment and updated risk assessment to be completed by the allocated social worker and authorised by the Director of Safeguarding.
- Within 24 hours of the placement ending and agreement to place the child at home, the social worker should notify the professional network and the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO).
- Each designated safeguarding lead from the network is responsible for informing their senior leader in their organisation.
- The Practice manager should notify the Missing and Exploitation team that a child at risk of exploitation is returning to the Borough and within 3 working days a sit down Strategy meeting is held. This will be chaired by a practitioner from the Missing and Exploitation team.
- This meeting will identify any safeguarding risks, and coordinate the details of any other vulnerable children in the area, and to share any significant intelligence with police, CSC, health and other relevant professionals involved, including foster carer/key worker where appropriate.
- The social work team and the network, should convene a Team Around the Child meeting within 10 days to review support package and support plan and review the placement search to inform the care plan.
- The Social worker will notify the IRO of the changes within 24 hours of the TAC meeting and within 5 days a date for a CLA Review is agreed to be held within 20 working days.
- Briefings on the children who are placed at home who fall under this Protocol to be sent weekly to the Director of Safeguarding, Director of Youth and Community and DCS by the Missing and Exploitation Safeguarding Manager on Friday of each week. The Director of Safeguarding is responsible for advising the Chief Exec and Lead Member for Children, Young People and Families. Briefings should include an update on the risks, current care plan and the frequency of contact. Changes to risk or plans

that occur during the week to be flagged with Senior Leaders to ensure oversight and challenge across the partnership where needed.

- **The Roles and responsibilities of other Key Partners Agencies:**

- **Police**

Police to be informed via the MASH with an additional email notification to be sent to DCI Brian Hobbs (Hobbs Brian P-CN-CU Brian.P.Hobbs@met.police.uk and D/Supt David Courcha where immediate action is required 101 should be called. In an emergency 999 should be called

- For any child at home in line with protocol, police will complete a special schemes on the home address. This will inform the responding officers of the circumstances, the rationale for the risk level and urgency. This special scheme will cease when the child is moved to their new placement. Should the child return home at any stage, police would need to be approached to renew the s/scheme.
- All reported absences will be directed as a missing person enquiry and treated as high risk unless there are clear factors why this grading is not appropriate.
- Following a discussion with the allocated social worker or manager a police (single agency or joint) visit may take place, if both agencies believe there is a benefit in doing so.
- Police will accompany Islington children's social Care and assist in placing the child when the appropriate care order is in place and or the identified placement is available.
- Police will prioritise the sharing of information that may come to light in relation to the relevant child whilst assessed as high risk.
- Police will inform Islington Children's Social Care if a child or parent is to be arrested whilst they are subject to this protocol. This is in the interest of safeguarding and allowing the most amount of time to make suitable plans. (Please note that this is sensitive information and disclosure of this information must not be discussed with anyone else without the authority of the police. To do so may result in an offence of perverting the course of justice. The professional will be reminded of this at the time of any information being shared.

- **Health**

- Once CLA Social worker updates LCS that the placement has ended CLA health are automatically notified of the placement changes via LCS.
- Within one week the child is discussed at the CLA health meeting for discussion and the administrator will ensure NHS electronic records (RIO) are updated and the case allocated to one of the nurse health advisers.
- Nurse health adviser review health needs and check to see if there are any health follow up appointments.
- Nurse health adviser must be provided with the correct address on where the child/young person is staying so the NHS files are kept updated.
- When child or young person changes placement they should be registering with a GP within 5 days – this could be a re-registration with the family GP and the health advisor can assist with this if support is needed.

- **Education**

- If the child is looked after the social worker will notify the named Virtual School Advisory teacher that they will be placed at home under placement with parent's regulation. The Virtual school advisory teacher will be responsible to co-ordinating the education provision and support for the child.
 - The Virtual School Head will oversee this and be the key point of contact.
 - For any child not yet looked and at home, the lead social worker or manager in CIN or CLA will notify Pupil Services to ensure they are notified that a child is high risk and at home while waiting for a placement to be identified.
 - Head of Admissions/Children out of School Pupil Services, will ensure they are supported with their education while at home.
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- If the child is looked-after the Virtual School will take responsibility for ensuring that while a child is placed at home they are engaged in learning. Where practical the child should be supported and encouraged to continue to attend their current school. If the child is on the role of a school but is unable to attend, the Virtual School will liaise with the school to inform them of the situation and discuss the appropriate interim education support. If the child is unable to attend their school this will normally be through the provision of 1-1 tuition, either on line or face to face. This will be set up within 2 days.
 - The school the child is on role to will continue to check the child's (daily) attendance, support the child, and monitor the child's progress, with the support of the Virtual School and social worker.
 - If the child is a looked-after child, the Virtual School will arrange, support and monitor the child's education and report to the appropriate leads in Pupil Services (Manager for admissions and child out of school)
 - If the child is returning to Islington after a placement breakdown and there are no plans for the child to move out of Islington the Virtual School will apply for a school place using the online application form and highlight the child's status and urgency of placement.
 - If the return home is a temporary arrangement the Virtual School will arrange and support interim education support. The Virtual School will liaise with the social worker and placements team about the future placement, to ensure that once a placement is identified a school application is completed as soon as possible.
 - However, it also should be noted that where a child has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or excluded, a different process will need to be followed at <https://www.islington.gov.uk/children-and-families/send-local-offer>
 - If the child has a current school, they would be expected to provide this. However, if they were excluded, they would be offered a place at New River College – as a local authority we would want to encourage school attendance rather than home learning for vulnerable children.

- **Housing**

- The Head of Service for Housing Needs, or the Director of Housing Needs and Strategy in their absence or should be notified.

- Details of the families' current housing situation should be shared with the Head of Service/Director – address, current family composition and landlord.
- Where there is a possibility of the family needing to move into alternative accommodation on a temporary basis the Head of Service/Director should be advised as soon as possible.
- If temporary accommodation is required information which may affect the type of accommodation the family can occupy needs to be shared i.e. wheelchair accessible, mobility standard etc.
- Before a temporary accommodation placement is sourced information relating to the risk towards the family in living in any areas outside of Islington should be shared with the Head of Service/Director.
- Based on the details shared with the Head of Service/Director they will feedback on what type of temporary accommodation may be available i.e. at short notice for a larger family hotel accommodation may be an option in the short term.

The Multi Agency High Risk Panel for children Looked After placed at home whilst awaiting a placement

The high Risk Panel is co-chaired by the Director of Safeguarding, Laura Eden and Detective Superintendent Dave Courcha, Metropolitan Police.

Placement with parents for high risk children where this is not part of the Care Plan are signed off by the DCS and the Director of Safeguarding to have oversight of risk, safety planning and the impact of this for children this repeats above and not relevant to high risk panel

The Purpose of the Meeting:

The Monthly Multi-Agency Meeting will be convened each month to review all the children Looked After or waiting to be Looked After placed at home who are known to be at risk of exploitation/being exploited to ensure that risk assessments and multi-agency planning is having an impact and reducing risks to children.

Partners are expected to come with any relevant information they have about the children and provide senior leadership with assurances that as a partnership we are doing everything we can to reduce risks to those children whilst we are not able to find a placement.

This multi-agency panel will convene once a month and the membership will consist of;

Membership:

1. Director of Safeguarding, Laura Eden and Detective Superintendent Dave Courcha, Metropolitan Police (chairs)
2. The Service manager from the CLA/CIN Service or a representative from the relevant social care service.
3. The Missing and Exploitation Team Service Manager.
4. Service Manager for Targeted Youth Support.
5. Head of Service for Youth Offending Service.
6. Designated safeguarding lead for Health

7. The Virtual or Deputy School head and or education safeguarding lead.
8. The lead worker or manager from the Placements Service

This protocol will be endorsed by the Missing and Vulnerable children and Adolescents Sub group and will be reviewed in May 2021.