



## Safeguarding children

### 1.03 Looked After Children

*Children and young people become 'looked after' if they have either been taken into care by the local authority or have been accommodated by the local authority (a voluntary care arrangement). Most LAC will be living in foster homes but a smaller number may be in a children's home, living with a relative or even placed back home with their natural parent(s). The local authority acts as the child's "corporate parent".*

#### Policy statement

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

We recognise that children who are being looked after have often experienced traumatic situations; physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect. However, we also recognise that not all looked after children have experienced abuse and that there are a range of reasons for children to be taken in to 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 impact on their emotional well-being.

Our policy and practice guidelines for looked after children are based on *attachment and resilience*. The basis of this is to promote secure attachments in children's lives as the basis for resilience. These aspects of well-being underpin the child's responsiveness to learning and are the basis in developing positive dispositions for learning. For young children 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.

#### 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 offer places to children under 2 ½ years old who are in care on a case by case basis. In such cases, the child should have been with the foster carer for at least two months and show signs of having formed a secure attachment to the carer and where the placement in the setting will last a minimum of three months.
- We offer places for funded two, three and four-year-olds who are in care to ensure they receive their entitlement to early education. We expect that a child will have been with a foster carer for a minimum of one month and has formed a secure attachment to the carer. We expect that the placement in the setting will last a minimum of six weeks.
- We will always offer 'stay and play' provision for a child who is two to five years old who is still settling with their foster carer, or who is only temporarily being looked after.
- 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 placement for the child.

#### Procedures

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

- Every child is allocated a key person on starting and this is no different for a looked after child. The designated person ensures the key person (and all other staff working with the child) has the information, support and training necessary to meet the looked after child's needs.
- The designated person or appropriate staff member liaises with agencies, professionals, practitioners and the child's family to ensure appropriate information is gained and shared.
- The setting recognises the role of the local authority 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 parents' 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 a placement there is a professionals meeting that will 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. Thereafter, at three to six monthly intervals. The care plan needs to consider such issues for the child as:
  - how any emotional issues and problems that affect behaviour are to be managed;
  - the child's sense of self, culture, language/s and identity – how this is to be supported;
  - the child's need for sociability and friendship;
  - the child's interests and abilities and possible learning journey pathway;
  - how any special needs will be supported;
  - the child's emotional needs and how they will be met.

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 will be discussed and agreed;
  - what written reporting is required;
  - wherever possible, and where the plan is for the child's 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 setting's activities that include parents, such as outings, 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 relationship with a member of staff sufficient 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, as is their sociability and their ability to manage their feelings with or without support.
  - 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, we will follow our normal safeguarding procedures.
  - Regular contact should be maintained with the social worker through planned meetings that will include the foster carer.
  - Transition to school will be handled sensitively and the designated person and or another appropriate member of staff will liaise with the school, passing on relevant information and documentation with the agreement of the child's social worker as detailed in the care plan.

### Further guidance

Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care (DfEE 2000)

Who Does What: How Social Workers & Carers can Support the Education of Looked After Children (DfES '05)

Supporting Looked After Learners - A Practical Guide for School Governors (DfES 2006)

**This policy was adopted at a meeting of Brighton Road Baptist Church Playschool Trustees.**

On 05/07/2018 (date)

Signed on behalf of the provider

Name of signatory Clair England

Role of signatory (e.g. chair, director or owner) Chair of Trustees

**Reviewed and updated by Sue Carter 21/01/2021**

**Reviewed by trustees 25/01/2021**