



Children's Safeguarding and Social Care Resource Team Policy and Procedures

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1. Information about the team

1.1 Role of the team

The Resource team is responsible for overseeing the provision of placements and services for children and families. The team's two key responsibilities are:

- Ensuring that the Children's Safeguarding and Social Work division (CSSW) can offer suitable services to children and families that meets the child's needs, supports family life and improves outcomes for children in the long term. This includes provision of suitable placements where a child can no longer live at home.
- Ensuring that the services provided represent value for money and that all resources are used effectively and efficiently, providing good outcomes for children within acceptable timescales for their development.

As Camden's policy is to support parents to look after their children at home where this is consistent with the child's welfare, the Resource Team will, in the first instance, help social workers to consider suitable community based resources that meet the child's needs, support parents and avoid the need for the child to be accommodated.

Where children are unable to live with their parents for any reason, the Resource team will support social workers to identify a member of the child's own network to look after the child outside of the care system and help them to access suitable packages of support to maintain the care arrangement.

If it is necessary for a child to become looked after, the Resource Team, in partnership with the Fostering Service, will identify a suitable placement, and commission appropriate support and services to ensure good outcomes.

The Resource team will work jointly with social workers to implement children's plans on the assumption that agreed procedures have been followed. It is an expectation that before resources can be accessed, a child and family assessment has been completed and appropriate authorisation of the proposed plan has been given.

1.2 Team objectives

These are to:

- identify and commission suitable placements and services for children and families;
- provide social workers with advice on suitable placements and/or packages of care for individual children;

- identify and arrange placements for children entering care or young people entering the young people's housing pathway;
- develop links with other agencies to ensure access to services ie: health, education;
- monitor the quality and implementation of children's plans;
- monitor the quality, use and effectiveness of all resources and placements, and manage budgets
- provide a supervised contact service to CSSW.

1.3 Structure of the team

The team is part of Children's Provision and consists of the following:

- a team manager
- a placements service of 1 senior practitioner and 3 social workers
- a supervised contact service of 1 senior practitioner and 9 family workers
- a referral co-ordinator for the Young People's Housing Pathway
- a referral co-ordinator for the Play Service
- 1 administrator.

1.4 Links with other services

The team works closely with the following to provide advice and information and facilitate access to resources:

- front-line social work teams
- the Fostering team
- the MALT
- Pupil Referral Units
- residential establishments in Camden
- providers
- North London Strategic Alliance consortium.

The team manager and other team members attend the following meetings and panels regularly:

- Legal planning meetings
- Complex needs panel
- Care pathways panel
- Social and medical needs panel.

2. Team responsibilities

2.1 Providing information and advice

The Resource team provides a central point of contact for social workers wishing to obtain placements and services for families they work with. The team can provide information and advice on the range of services and resources available and discuss the appropriateness of the resource in terms of meeting the individual child's needs and implementing their plan.

The team operates a daily duty system so that a social worker is available to discuss requests for services and placements prior to a formal request being made. This will enable social workers to explore options and help them to devise a suitable package of care. The Resource team will also help social workers and their managers to critically appraise the child's plan and look at alternatives where appropriate.

Points at which children's social workers may wish to seek advice from the Resource team are:

- when the child first becomes known to CSSW and the child and family assessment has been completed and the child's needs are known;
- where a child living at home is at risk of needing accommodation;
- where a legal planning meeting is being held to discuss possible applications for care or other orders;
- during the Family Group Conference process, social workers may wish to discuss what resources can be made available to families to support any plan that is being considered;
- where care proceedings are being considered, social workers may want to explore parent and child placements for the purpose of carrying out assessments;
- where placements are at risk of breaking down, social workers may wish to discuss possible supports for the child and carer in order to maintain the placement;
- when a young person is remanded into the care of the local authority by a criminal court, the YOS worker or social worker will need to discuss possible placements and services to support the young person during the remand period.

A note of discussions and any advice given should be recorded on the Resource team consultation case note on the child's Framework i record by the Resource team social worker.

2.2 Commissioning and brokering services and placements

The team have expert knowledge of the private and voluntary fostering market and residential children's homes across England and will use this knowledge to commission placements that are best able to meet the needs of individual children, implement their care plans and provide good outcomes.

The team is part of the North London Strategic Alliance of local authorities working together to commission a wide choice of placements and resources. This means the team will select from a hierarchy of providers who have been checked and approved by the alliance through a tender process that ensures services and placements offering a high standard of care (being rated at least good by Ofsted) and good value for money.

Where the child's needs are such that they require a specialised placement or service, the team will spot-purchase the provision based on a thorough assessment of the child's needs.

If the child has complex needs or there is a high risk of placement breakdown, the team member that has been allocated to that case will visit a proposed placement in advance to ensure that it is able to meet the child's needs and provide a high quality of care.

The team will only place children with providers which are rated good or above by OFSTED and will always monitor and review services delivered by providers to ensure contractual obligations are met. Placements and services are regularly reviewed by the team and contracts are completed for every placement to reflect the individual needs of the child and how these will be met.

All placements are tracked by the team so that a timely decision can be taken if there are concerns about the quality of care and there is a need to find an alternative placement.

If there are problems with a placement and there is a risk of breakdown, the team will meet with the child's social worker, their IRO and the provider to look at how the placement can be supported and sustained. Generally, the team will work with providers to keep a child in placement and would only look to move the child to another placement where there are serious concerns.

In the event of a placement breakdown, the team would look at what were the issues that led to this and what can be learnt from the case in order to improve provision.

Allegations regarding the provision may result in a child protection investigation or be dealt with under Camden's LADO procedures. Where there are care standards issues, a care standards meeting will be convened which is chaired wither by the Fostering manager or the Resource team manager.

2.3 Supervised contact service

The supervised contact service provides dedicated Family Workers with the necessary expertise to oversee contact arrangements where this is regarded as necessary either to safeguard the child from harm or to carry out an agreed assessment, for example a parenting assessment.

For further details on the service go to: <..\Looked after children\LAC 9 - contact policy.doc>

2.4 Providing funding

The Resource team provides section 20 funding only for children who are looked after (see section 5.3)

There is a small budget for packages of care for preventative work with a family where the child is living at home but is at risk of accommodation. This budget is only accessed by the Resource Team exceptionally.

For kinship care cases where the child is looked after by a Regulation 24 carer, the assessment or CIN team is responsible for paying the kinship carer's allowance from the section 17 budget up to the conclusion of the viability assessment and once this is signed off by the service manager, the Resource team will take over responsibility for paying the carer from the section 20 budget.

2.5 Monitoring and quality assurance

The resource team carries out a vital quality assurance role within the division by ensuring:

- agreed procedures have been followed before children are accommodated
- children's plans are meeting their needs and are being implemented in a timely manner
- alternative strategies or services are considered before a child is accommodated
- commissioned services and placements meet statutory requirements and standards and represent good value
- resources are being used efficiently.

This is done by:

- attending reviews of children's plans and other planning meetings to provide advice
- membership of various panels in an advisory capacity
- tracking and monitoring children's plans

- providing regular reports for the Assistant Director and SMT on the numbers of children accommodated, highlighting practice issues and resource gaps for discussion and action.

The Resource team manager will also advise social workers on the impact of resources for children who remain subject to **child protection plans** at the 2nd review as part of the discussion on whether or not to refer the case to the PLO/care proceedings panel.

The Resource *Team* will monitor **care plans** by:

- monitoring and evaluating the use of services and resources put in place to enable a child's care plan;
- tracking the progress of each child's care plan;
- ensuring that tasks are achieved within the given time scales;
- monitoring all placements against the child's care plan to ensure the appropriateness of the placement;
- reviewing timescales for all placements on a monthly basis;
- ensuring that LAC in out of borough placements receive a good standard of care;
- monitoring the quality of residential and P&V placements in line with statutory guidance;
- ensuring that timescales are met for medicals and developmental and dental checks.

3. Working with social work teams

3.1 Referral for placements and resources

It is an expectation that social workers will have completed the child and family assessment, agreed an outline plan with their manager or supervisor and obtained the relevant level of managerial authorisation for resources before approaching the Resource team for services or placements.

The child's social worker should ensure that the assessment and all other relevant documents are available on Framework i for the Resource team social worker to read.

All requests for placements, including placement changes, must be recorded on the *Request for Placement and Matching Record* on Framework i and it must be clearly recorded on the Framework i episode that the decision to accommodate the child has been authorised at the relevant managerial level.

Requests for places on the Young People's Housing Pathway should be recorded on the *Pathway Request Record* and will be dealt with by the Housing Pathway co-ordinator. Social workers must contact the co-ordinator to ensure that a risk assessment is carried out prior to any accommodation being allocated.

Requests for other services should be made on the service request form.

3.2 Emergency requests

Requests for a placement or resource in an emergency prior to completing the child and family assessment should only happen under exceptional circumstances. In these cases, social workers should discuss the matter with the service manager and get authorisation to contact the Resource team directly to discuss the child's needs.

The Resource team social worker will identify a suitable placement based on the information provided. The Resource team manager should be notified of all emergency requests so that these can be monitored.

A note of discussions and details of what resources were agreed and a record of managerial authorisation should be recorded on Framework i and a *placement request record* completed as soon as possible.

3.3 Joint working with children's social workers

In cases where the child has a high level of complex needs or there are heightened risks so that the child requires a specialist placement or package of care, a SW will be allocated from the team to work jointly with the child's social worker to provide the most effective service. For example children:

- with mental health problems
- with disabilities
- at high-risk of self-harm
- with a history of substance misuse
- at risk of sexual exploitation
- who may have been trafficked
- with a history of criminal or anti-social behaviour or fire raising and/or are known to YOS
- at risk of or in secure accommodation
- who have had multiple placements
- who are hard to place
- with highly charged contact which may have impact on foster placements.

3.4 Attending reviews and meetings

Whenever a child's plan is being discussed or reviewed, and it is likely that there may be requests for or changes to services or placements, social workers should consider inviting a member of the Resource team to that meeting. This is particularly important where the contingency plan for the child may involve care proceedings or accommodation. Where a case is being joint worked (see above) the allocated Resource team social worker must be invited to attend.

The role of the Resource team social worker is to advise on the availability of suitable resources and their appropriateness in meeting the child's needs and implementing their plan. The social worker can also advise on the effectiveness of current packages of care where there are concerns that outcomes are not being achieved.

It is recommended that any potential requests for resources are discussed with the Resource team manager in advance of the meeting to ensure availability and to seek agreement to any costs.

Consideration should be given to inviting a Resource team social worker to the following meetings:

- CIN reviews
- Child protection conferences
- Placement agreement meetings
- LAC reviews
- Disruption meetings
- Risk of breakdown meetings
- Risk of secure accommodation meetings
- Secure accommodation reviews
- Legal planning meetings.

3.5 Legal orders

Where children's social workers decide to seek advice from Legal Services on applying for a court order, the Resource team should be notified and invited to the legal planning meeting to help plan for placements and packages of care.

The Resource team should also be contacted as soon as possible following the making of a PPO or an EPO that is made out of hours, particularly if it will be necessary to apply for further legal orders so that CSSW can continue to accommodate the child.

4. Community based services

4.1 Description of services

The Resource team will work with allocated social workers to focus on providing preventative services that support families and enable children to remain living at home whilst meeting their needs and safeguarding their welfare.

Although most support for families will be agreed by CIN managers through the section 17 budget, the Resource team has links with other services and can help social workers access more specialist community services such as Family workers for individual work, parenting programmes, play schemes, nurseries, child minding and day care, SEN, Pupil Referral Units, MALT and CAMHS.

4.2 Support for family and friends care arrangements

The Resource team aims to help children to remain out of the care system and in the care of their own family network. For this reason, Resource team social workers will help children's social workers to explore family and friends care arrangements for children who are temporarily unable to live with their parents. The status and funding of these arrangements will need to be negotiated.

4.3 Children at risk of accommodation

Where a child is at risk of accommodation, the Resource team will work with the child's social worker to divert the child away from the care system where this is feasible through an enhanced package of care to support the child to remain at home.

Strategies that will be used to explore alternatives to the care system are:

- a Family Group Conference to explore alternative care within the child's family and friends network (kinship arrangement);
- referral to the *Care Pathways* panel for advice and decision-making at a senior managerial level.

5 Looked after children services

5.1 Placements

Once the decision to accommodate a child has been made the social worker should contact the Resource team to discuss placement needs and complete the *Request for Placement and Matching record* (see above).

The Resource team will then explore possible placement options with the social worker and when doing so, will be guided by the division's LAC placements policy:

- If a child is to be placed with parents on an interim care order or whilst a parenting assessment is carried out, the Resource team can help social workers to look at specific packages of support for parents to care for the child at home or look for suitable parent and child placement.

- The team will work with the child's social worker to identify potential kinship carers for the child and devise a package of support for the carer and the child.
- If the child is to be placed with a Camden foster carer, the Resource team will work in partnership with the child's social worker and the Fostering team to match the child with the most suitable carer and devise a package of support for the placement.
- If a suitable Camden or Consortium foster carer cannot be identified, the Resource team will identify and match the child with a suitable foster carer from an approved private and voluntary agency in partnership with Fostering social workers.
- If the child has needs that can only be met through specialist residential placement, for example health or educational needs, the Resource team will identify and negotiate the placement.
- If a young person aged 16 or 17 is leaving care or has been assessed as homeless, they will be offered semi-independent accommodation on the Young People's Housing Pathway.
- If a young person is remanded into the care of the local authority by a criminal court, the Resource team will identify a specialist remand foster placement that is able to meet their needs and enable them to meet any remand conditions (please see the LAC remands policy).
- If a young person requires secure accommodation, the Resource team will identify a place in a secure unit that will meet their needs and provide a level of care and control appropriate to their situation (please see the LAC secure accommodation policy).

5.2 Attendance at Reviews

Copies of the minutes of each statutory review should be sent to the Resource team. The Resource team will attend each child's second review if considered necessary by the IRO, to review the existing resource package or to assist with the provision of additional resources to facilitate the child's care plan and their permanency plan.

5.3 Financing packages of support

The Resource team will be responsible for organising and financing resource packages from the section 20 budget to support care plans for looked after children. This will include:

- Transport costs for the child/young person
- Contact arrangements
- Therapy costs

- Additional tuition (including music or dance classes)
- School uniforms
- Other additional clothing
- Sports equipment
- Personal requirements of the child/young person (e.g. spectacles).

The following items will be continued to be funded by the centres:

- Expenditure incurred by parents (e.g. contact visits)
- Birthday gifts from social workers
- Items for life story work
- Expenses around direct work with the child.

(The above are not exhaustive lists. The service manager should be consulted if there is doubt)

5.4 Placement breakdown

Where an existing placement shows signs of being at risk of breakdown, the child's social worker should convene either a "risk of placement breakdown" meeting (short-term placements) or a "Disruption" meeting (permanent placements).

It is important that the Resource team are contacted as soon as possible for advice on resources that can support placements and prevent placement breakdown. The Resource Team social worker should also be invited to breakdown/disruption meetings so that they can advise on what resources could be put in to support the continuation of the placement or whether an alternative placement should be sought.

5.5 Missing from placement

The Resource team will work to the Camden missing children protocol and will be notified of any unauthorised absence or missing episodes from placements. The allocated Resource team social worker will work with the child's social worker to share information and help locate the child. If the missing incidents raise issues about the placement, the social worker will attend any planning meetings or risk of breakdown meetings.

5.6 Out of borough placements

The Resource team will take all reasonable steps to ensure that children are placed either in the borough or in neighbouring London boroughs within a twenty mile radius of Camden. In general, children will only be placed out of borough where:

- a specialist residential placement is needed;
- the child is being placed with a kinship carer;
- the child needs to be placed at a distance from Camden for their own safety and welfare.

Where it is necessary to place a child out of borough, the consent of the service manager will be sought by the Resource team in advance of the placement being agreed. The Assistant Director will be asked to consent to any placement where the child is being placed at a distance from Camden.

Prior to any out of borough placement taking effect and the Resource team social worker make enquiries of the receiving authority via the consortium of local resources and any characteristics of the local area that may pose a risk to the child if placed there. The team will carry out a risk assessment before any child is placed.

The Resource team will work with the child's social worker to negotiate with the receiving authority around services to be made available to the child on placement, including universal services, any specialist medical service or CAMHS. The team will also agree for any extra resources, for example transport, that will support the placement.

The Resource team will use links with SEN and the LAC virtual school where there may be difficulties in accessing resources for the child and will carry out a risk assessment on all placements in advance, linking with the child's social worker and the professional network to gather all information relevant to the assessment.

Support for children returning home

Whenever reunification is the child's permanence plan, the Resource team social worker will work with the allocated social worker to devise a suitable child in need plan to support the child and their birth family once the child returns home.