



Children's Safeguarding and Social Work

Corporate Parenting Service

Placement visits policy

1 Purpose

Placement visits are one of the key safeguarding mechanisms for CLA and offer CLA social workers a chance to:

- ensure the child is safe and well and that the foster carer is providing a good standard of care that promotes the child's welfare
- help the social worker to build up a trusting relationship with the child
- observe the child and their interactions with their carer and other members of the household
- carry out direct work, including life story work, with the child
- ascertain the child's views and wishes and take these into account as well as offer reassurance and help them to settle in their new home
- monitor work being carried out within the placement to implement and support the care plan
- check the home environment and find out if there have been any changes of household composition
- carry out any agreed work with the foster carer to support their role in caring for the child in partnership with their supervising social worker.

2 Frequency of visits

Visits to **fostering and residential** placements should be carried out by the child's allocated social worker and should take place at a **minimum requirement** of:

- within 1 week of the child being placed (including any placement moves), then
- for the first year of the placement, at least every 6 weeks
- after that, at least every 6 weeks if the placement is not a permanent arrangement **or**
- if the child is in a permanent placement that will last until their 18th birthday at least every 3 months.

Permanent placements for the purposes of this policy are extremely stable long-term placements where the statutory CLA review has agreed that visits can take place at a minimum of every 3 months. This should be recorded on the Chair's Report of the CLA review.

When considering whether to reduce the frequency of visits to 3 months, the IRO should take the following into account:

- the age of the child (babies and teenagers generally need a higher frequency of visits)
- the views of the child
- the stability of the placement
- the type of placement (visits to children and young people in residential units should only be reduced to 3 months in exceptional circumstances).

Statutory long term fostering placements

If the child has been placed in a statutory long-term fostering placement under care planning regulations and which has been recommended by the Adoption, Fostering and Permanence Panel and agreed by the Agency Decision Maker, the frequency of visits must be as for all placements for the first year of the placement.

After that, the frequency of visits can be reduced to a minimum of every six months if this has been agreed by the statutory CLA review and agreed by the child, who must have the necessary understanding and competence to make this decision. Please refer to the Long-term fostering policy for further details.

<https://ascpractice.camden.gov.uk/media/3205/long-term-fostering-policy.pdf>

Regulation 24 placements

Where a child has been placed with family and friends in a Regulation 24 placement visits should take place at a minimum of:

- once a week until the first CLA review is held, then
- at least every 4 weeks until either the placement ends or the carer is approved as a Camden foster carer, when frequency of visits will be as for all placements.

Placement with parents

Where a child has been placed at home with parents in an emergency (either as a result of placement breakdown or by order of the court) and before a full placement at home assessment is completed, visits should be:

- once a week until the first CLA review is held, then
- at least every 6 weeks until the assessment is completed
- then at the same frequency as for other placements.

Where the child is placed at home with parents ***under an Interim Care Order***, visits should take place:

- once a week until the first CLA review is held, then
- at least every 4 weeks until the completion of care proceedings.

Where the child is placed at home with parents ***under a full Care Order***, visits should take place:

- within 1 week of the order being granted, then
- at least every 6 weeks.

Secure accommodation and remands

Where a child is placed in ***secure accommodation*** visits should take place:

- within 1 week of the placement or sentence commencing, then
- every 6 weeks for the first year, then
- every 3 months subsequently.

Where a young person is ***remanded*** into local authority care or youth detention accommodation visits should take place:

- within 1 week of the placement or remand, then
- every 6 weeks.

Other provisions

- IROs can agree to change the frequency of visits to placements as required by the circumstances of the case as long as the statutory minimum frequency is observed (see above).
- Visits should also take place when reasonably requested by the child or their carer.
- Visits should also take place within one week of receiving notification under section 30A of the Care Standards Act 2000 (when action has been taken against a children's home or fostering agency by their regulating agencies).

Child protection cases

If a child who is subject to a child protection plan becomes looked after, they must continue to be visited as often as the child protection plan stipulates and in line with Camden's child protection policy whilst the plan remains in place.

A child protection visit may be carried out at the same time as the statutory CLA placement visit as long as it is clearly recorded on the child's MOSAIC record that both visits have taken place and the required records completed for both visits.

3 Arrangements for visits

- Although social workers and children and young people may prefer to meet at different locations in order to carry out direct work, a statutory visit must be carried out at the placement at the required frequency so that social workers can monitor the home environment.
- Statutory visits should be scheduled with the foster carer or residential unit and recorded in the visits section on MOSAIC. The date of the next scheduled visit should also be inputted so that the system is able to generate a reminder.
- Visits should be carried out by the child's allocated CLA social worker, but team managers are responsible for ensuring that planned statutory visits are undertaken by another team member when the allocated social worker is absent for any period of time.
- If the child is placed at some distance to Camden and travelling distances make it impractical for social workers to visit the placement within the required frequency, this should be discussed by the social worker and their supervisor. In these cases, it may be more practical to make arrangements with a responsible officer from the receiving local authority to visit the child on Camden's behalf and provide a report.
- There is a statutory requirement for the social worker to see and speak to the child in private unless:
 - the child (who is of sufficient age and understanding) refuses
 - the social worker considers it inappropriate given the child's age and understanding or disability
 - the social worker is unable to do so.

- It is essential that the child is given an opportunity to speak to the social worker alone so that they are able to talk freely about how they feel regarding the placement as this is a major safeguarding mechanism. Babies and children under 3 should be seen whilst awake.
- If it is not possible to see the child at the statutory visit, the visit must be re-scheduled. If the child is not seen alone, the reason for this must be recorded in the record of the visit. If social workers have any difficulty in seeing the child or speaking to them alone, this must be reported to the manager or supervisor and the child's IRO.

4 Joint visits with supervising social workers

If the child is pCLAed with a Camden foster carer, CLA social workers should carry out a joint pCLAement visit with the foster carer's supervising social worker between each statutory review. Social workers should refer to the Fostering Service policy "Supervision and support of carers" for further details.

<https://ascpractice.camden.gov.uk/media/3278/fostering-5-supervision-and-support-of-carers.pdf>

5 Recording visits

All statutory visits should be recorded in the visits function on MOSAIC; this enables social workers to schedule the next required date and generates a reminder from the system as the date of the visit approaches.

A record of statutory visits should be written up on the *statutory visit records* available under the Documents button. The completed record should be sent to the supervisor or manager for authorisation and when returned, uploaded onto the child's MOSAIC record.

If the frequency of visits has been reduced, either because the CLA review has agreed it is a stable permanent placement or the placement is a statutory long-term fostering placement, this must be recorded so it is clear that the change in frequency has been authorised and remains within statutory frequency.

6 Monitoring visits

Managers and supervisors are responsible for ensuring that CLA statutory visits are carried out within the required timescales. IROs should also monitor this as part of the CLA review process.

It is likely that the frequency of visits will need to be set above the minimum statutory requirement, particularly at the beginning of the placement or when a placement is in difficulties and extra support is needed to avoid placement breakdown. The frequency of placement visits should be discussed and agreed at all CLA reviews.

If there are any concerns about a placement following a visit, social workers should discuss this with their manager, the supervising social worker and the child's IRO and a decision made on what action to take. This may include bringing forward the statutory review to explore whether the placement remains viable.