



Children's Safeguarding and Social Work

Supporting looked after children
during consultation

*Guidance for social workers and others on helping
CLA complete consultation forms for reviews*

Introduction

All CLA must be consulted prior to their review meeting in order to ascertain their wishes and feelings and get their views. This is so the child is able to participate in the review process in some way and will allow the review meeting to address any issues raised by the child, whether they are present or not.

In general, helping children with the consultation forms will be the social worker's responsibility but in some cases, it may be more beneficial for the child to work with another member of their professional network, such as their foster carer or a teacher. This can be discussed and agreed at the CLA review.

Professionals supporting the child to complete the consultation form should use the statements to encourage a dialogue with the child that elicits their wishes and feelings on a wide range of subjects that affect their life.

The following guidance provides professionals with an idea of what areas to cover when discussing each item. It is hoped that this way, reviews will become more focussed on the child's experience of care and their relationships.

There are 4 versions of the consultation form:

- Ages 4-7
- Ages 8-11
- Ages 12+
- 16+ care leavers living in pathway accommodation

Statements have been formulated so they are easily understood by that particular age group but all the consultation forms are structured in the same way, inviting children to respond to a statement and where appropriate, to give a response based on a scale as to how they feel about particular aspects of their lives.

Section 1 –care/pathway plans

This section aims to establish whether the child has a proper understanding as to why they are being looked after and what will happen to them in the long-term. The section also allows the child to express their views on their relationship with their social worker/personal assistant or key worker and how this person is supporting them practically and emotionally.

For young people, discussion should also include what plans are being put in place for when they leave care. For those with pathway plans, discussion should focus on how well the plan is able to support their transition to independence.

Section 2 – placements

The question should help the child explore their feelings about the placement and their relationships with the people with whom they live, especially their carer.

This should give an indication as to whether they feel safe and secure in the placement and that they “fit in”. This should be an opportunity to gauge how successfully the placement is meeting the child’s needs and any risk of the child running away.

Section 3 – feelings

This section helps the child explore how they feel about their life in general, any worries they have and who they would go to if they needed to talk about problems. It should give an indication as to whether they feel safe and also provide an insight into the child’s mental and emotional welfare.

For care leavers, this section should look at any feelings of loss or isolation and how the young person is coping emotionally with the transition to independence.

Section 4– Activities

This section aims to find out what hobbies, interests and activities the child pursues out of school, both with the carer and in after-school and other clubs. The discussion should explore how these activities can positively impact on the child’s resilience, and look at any other activities the child wishes to do.

Section 5 – family and friends

This section should look at contact arrangements with birth family and the child’s relationships with their family and friends. In particular, the child should be able to give their views on how they feel about contact and if there are other people they would like to see but whom they currently have no contact with, would like to see more of or whom they do not wish to see at all.

CLA consultations

For young people, this is an opportunity to consider their support network for when they move to independence, or any desire to return home on leaving care, as well as exploring how they feel about any intimate relationships.

Section 6 – school and beyond

This section should be used to get the child to talk about how they feel about school, whether they feel they are making progress, and their aspirations for the future.

For young people, the section should look at whether they are engaged in education, training and employment and what support they need to pursue long term education or career goals.

Section 7 - review

This section should be used to discuss arrangements for the CLA review, its purpose and how the child can contribute to the process and have their views heard.

The tick-box section is a checklist of practical items that allows the person facilitating the consultation to flag up any problem areas for discussion at the review.