

A Parent's Guide to Looked After Reviews

This information sheet is also available in Welsh.

Introduction

We hope that this information sheet will help you to get a better understanding of Looked After Reviews including what happens at the review meetings, where they take place, who can attend and what part you can play in it.

If you have any questions that are not answered in this information sheet or there is anything you don't understand, your child/ren's Social Worker will be able to help you.

What is a Looked After Child Review?

A Looked After Child (LAC) review is held to talk about your child and their progress whilst they are being looked after by the local authority. The review brings together those people who are involved in your child's life and is an opportunity to:-

- Review your child's care plan – the document which sets out how your child will be cared for while they are looked after.
- Discuss your child's progress.
- Make plans for the future.
- To enable you to give your views about the plans for your child and to take part in the decisions for their future.

What is my child's Care Plan?

All children who are looked after must have a Care Plan that is reviewed within their review meeting. It is a document that details your child's needs and how they are to be met. This will include where they live, contact with family and friends, their cultural, religious, health, educational and leisure needs. A copy of your child's Care Plan will be given to you, their carer and your child (dependent on their age).

How often do review meetings happen?

The first review must be held within four weeks of the date on which your child begins to be a looked after child. If your child remains looked after, there must be a second review no more than three months after that. Then reviews have to be held at least every six months or more often if necessary.

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Who will be at the review meetings?

- Your child, if they are old enough and understand what is going on.
- Yourself and anyone else with parental responsibility (unless there is a specific reason why you can't attend).
- Your child's Social Worker.
- Your child's Foster Carer or Residential Worker.

Sometimes other professionals attend, for example your child's teacher or someone from health such as a health visitor or school nurse. This is particularly helpful when there is a problem to sort out. However, we try to limit attendance when we know children will be attending their reviews so that they feel more able to speak openly.

In exceptional cases, parents and supporters of the child will not be allowed to attend the meeting. The Independent Reviewing Officer and the child's Social Worker will make this decision together and explain the reasons why.

What is an Independent Reviewing Officer?

An Independent Reviewing Officer is an experienced Social Worker and independent of Education & Children's Services. It is their role to chair the review meeting and to see that everyone is treated fairly in the meeting and that all the important issues are talked about. He or she will also take an independent look at what is happening for your child.

Where are the review meetings held?

Reviews are sometimes held at the Council Offices, at School or a venue mutually agreed with your child if age appropriate.

It may be appropriate in many cases to hold the review in your child's placement so that all attending can see where they live and meet the carers.

What happens at the review meetings?

In the review meetings, we talk about what everyone can do to make sure your child is safe, well and happy and that we are working towards them having a long-term stable place to live. We will see if anything was suggested for your child in an earlier review, if the suggestion was carried out and if there's anything more that needs to be done. We agree who needs to take action and by whom.

At the meeting the main focus of discussion will be:-

Health – to check that your child has a healthy lifestyle and that their health needs are being met to ensure that they are physically, mentally and emotionally well. If your child has special needs or a disability, the review will also cover how these needs will be met.

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Staying Safe – to enable your child to enjoy a safe environment and be protected from abuse, exploitation and fear of crime.

Enjoy and achieve – the review will look at the support in place for your child's development and education so that they can achieve their potential and their ambitions, and so they can enjoy life for example through leisure activities.

Making a positive contribution – depending on his/her age, your child will be encouraged to be involved in decision making about his/her future.

Moving towards independence, training and employment – for older children, the review will consider how they are being supported to go into further education, training or a job and if they are being helped with the skills to become an independent young adult.

Culture, ethnicity and religion – your child's need to maintain their religious and cultural identity will be considered.

Contact – the review will consider the arrangements for your child's contact with his/her family and other people who are important to them.

Legal Status – your child may be being looked after by the local authority on a voluntary basis (including when this is for short breaks) or because of a Court Order. If this legal status needs to change, the review will consider this.

At the end of the meeting, a date for the next review will be agreed.

The Independent Reviewing Officer will make sure the meeting is as child friendly and relaxed as possible so your child feels comfortable and safe enough to contribute.

It is important if you are attending the review to consider carefully what you would like to say in the meeting.

To help gain your views, a consultation form is sent out with your invite to the review and we ask you to complete the form and either bring it with you to the review or if you can't attend send it back to the Independent Reviewing Officer.

After the review

The Independent Reviewing Officer will complete minutes of the review meeting which record the recommendations that are made and make sure that the actions agreed are completed. You will be sent a copy of the minutes.

What happens if you can't attend your child's review?

If you are unable to attend the review, please complete the consultation form that was sent to you with your invite to the review and return it to the Independent Reviewing Officer.

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Short Breaks

If your child is having a LAC Review because they stay with Foster Carers or in a Children's Home for short breaks, the first review will be held within three months of the short breaks starting. Then reviews will be held at least every six months. These reviews will discuss how your child's placement is going and if this is the best arrangement to support your family.

What if I want the review to be held in Welsh or any other language?

If so, please get in touch with either your child's Social Worker or Independent Reviewing Officer as soon as possible so arrangements can be made.

Complaints

If you want to make a suggestion, compliment or complaint about any of the services provided by Education & Children's Services you can contact the Complaints Officer in any of the following ways:-

Freephone number: 0800 032 1099

Email: ssdcomments@denbighshire.gov.uk

Write to:- The Complaints Officer, Russell House, Churton Road, Rhyl, Denbighshire, LL18 3DP

Web: www.denbighshire.gov.uk/yourvoice

This Information Sheet can be made available in alternative formats; large braille, audit tape or disk.