



Placement with Family and Friends Assessment Protocol

24 August 2017



Placement with Family and Friends Assessment Protocol

Abbreviations used:

PWFFT – Placements with Family and Friends Team

CSC – Children's Social Care

At the outset, it should be noted that the responsibility for referral to the PWFFT lies with the CSC Social Work Team. Legal will not make this referral.

It is also imperative that communication takes place regularly between CSC and PWFFT about ongoing assessments and that legal are notified promptly by the CSC SW of any delay with the assessment. Full reasons for the delay should also be communicated to legal by the PWFFT (CC: the CSC Social Worker) with a position statement (joint with PWFFT if appropriate) being filed where necessary.

For guidance on the procedures for referrals via LCS see here - <R:\CIS\Adoption & Fostering Recruitment & Assessment Team\SGO\Reg 24 Process\Process of LCS referral.pdf>

At Court, CSC must ring the duty manager or Team Manager from the PWFFT to discuss and agree appropriate timescales if the agreed 4 weeks for a viability and 8 weeks for a full assessment cannot be allowed.

STAGE 1

[To be completed within 2 working days of Case Management Hearing or Initial Pre-Proceedings Meeting]

- All referrals to the PWFFT to be made via LCS using the Connected Persons Viability Assessment Form.
- PC4 checks to be undertaken by CSC Social Worker.
- CSC Social Workers must consider at a very early stage whether it is necessary to start to consider alternative family Carers for a child who is:-
 - a. Subject to any assessment by CSC and is likely to be removed from the parents care as a result;
 - b. Is part of the Pre-Proceedings Process (Parents should be asked to provide details of proposed alternative Carers at the initial Pre Proceedings Meeting);
 - c. In respect of whom an application has been made (Parents should be asked to provide Carers/enquiries should be made and the appropriate referral should be made by the Social Worker when the SWET is completed);
 - d. Only in very urgent (EPO type circumstances) should the referral in Form A be deferred until after the Case Management Hearing.

- **The referral to the PWFFT is to be made on LCS using the Connected Persons Viability Form only. Viability Assessments on a Word Document will no longer be accepted and the PWFFT are to be involved in all viability assessments from the date of implementation of this protocol.**
- (The CSC Social Worker is not expected to visit or to commence the assessment at this juncture) but is required to ensure that as a minimum Part 1 of the Form A will include:
 - a. the full name(s) and date(s) of birth for the Applicant;
 - b. The full names and date(s) of birth of all adults living in the Applicant's property;
 - c. The full names and date(s) of birth for all children living in the property;
 - d. A current address and current contact number for the Applicant;
 - e. The full name, e-mail address and contact tel no for the Solicitor with conduct (not Counsel).
 - f. The type of assessment being requested and the filing date for submission of the report with the courts
 - g. Confirmation that the proposed care has been spoken to and is in agreement with the referral being made

The following sections of the form must be completed:

- With whom and where is the child/ren currently living
 - Current legal status. Is there an allocated solicitor for LCC?
 - Have proceedings been initiated
 - Reasons why the child is requiring the placement
 - What are the long term plans for the child
 - Is the proposed carer in the timeframe for any injuries
 - Summary of family history
- h. Confirm that the child would have appropriate sleeping arrangements
 - i. Confirm that LCS checks have been undertaken and whether there are any areas of concern/safeguarding issues evident.

NB: Once agreed this Protocol will be circulated to all Chambers also, so that LA Counsel are aware of the timescales and are asked to assist in ascertaining as much information as possible at the first hearing to expedite the referrals process.

STAGE 2

[To be completed within 4 working days of Case Management Hearing or Initial Pre-Proceedings Meeting]

- Once the CSC Social Worker has completed the Connected Persons Viability Form, they will reassign that via LCS to their Practice Manager.
- The Practice Manager will then be responsible for sending the referral to the PWFFT by re-assigning it (do not finalise the form) the "Placement with Friends and Family Team Tray" on LCS.
- Social Worker or Practice Manager from CSC to provide a copy of the court order.

(SEE ATTACHED ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE FOR INSTRUCTIONS ON LCS)

STAGE 3

[To be completed within 5 working days of Case Management Hearing or Initial Pre-Proceedings Meeting]

- The Team Manager on the PWFFT checks the "Placement with Family and Friends Tray". A check will be made a minimum of once per day.
- The PWFFT Manager will then move any new referral to the Duty Allocations Tray and a Duty Practice Manager will allocate any Connected Persons Viability Assessment referral to either a Duty Social Worker on the PWFFT or a Social Worker on that team who has capacity.

STAGE 4

[To be completed within 6 working days of the referral to the PWFFT]

- The allocated Social Worker in the PWFFT will make contact with the CSC Social Worker and the subject(s) of the assessment and joint visit will be arranged within 5 working days (2 working days if the placement is unregulated).
- The PWFFT will keep a log of their attempts to contact the subject(s) of the assessment and this will be shared with CSC and legal as and when necessary.
- Once the visit has taken place the PWFFT Social Worker will complete Part 2 of the Connected Persons Viability Assessment.
- The PWFFT Social Worker will then re-assign the Connected Persons Viability Assessment Form via LCS to their Practice Manager.

NB: If there has not been any response to the referral from CSC by the PWFFT within 2 clear working days, the CSC Social Worker should contact the PWFFT to check on progress.

STAGE 5

[To be completed within 1 working day of the receipt of the completed (Parts 1 and 2) Form A]

- The Practice Manager PWFFT will then complete Part 3 of the Form A.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

VIABILITY ONLY

- If the assessment is not progressing beyond the viability stage (i.e. the assessment is for contingent care and a full assessment is not required at that time) then the PWFFT Manager will outcome Part 4 indicating whether or not the PWFFT would proceed with a full assessment in the future if required.
- There would be a discussion between CSC and the PWFFT about the care plan and whether an SGO Assessment, Fostering Assessment, Joint SGO & Fostering Assessment or any other assessment would be necessary/appropriate in the future.
- The PWFFT will agree any redactions with the subject(s). It is noted that it will only be in a very rare case that anything other than financial information will be redacted from any assessment.
- The PWFFT Manager would then send the completed Connected Persons Assessment Referral to the CSC Social Worker and Practice Manager and to the Solicitor with conduct at Legal. Once legal received a Viability from PWFFT Team Manager, this will be considered to be a final document and a final decision.
- Legal will file the viability with the Court and serve on the subject.
- In the event of a negative viability, the Local Authority would not propose to undertake a full assessment, whether that be SGO or Fostering.

IMMEDIATE/URGENT REG 24 APPROVAL

What is Regulation 24? - <R:\CIS\Adoption & Fostering Recruitment & Assessment Team\SGO\Reg 24 Process\Regulation 24.pdf>

Who does what if Regulation 24 is agreed?

CSC Social Worker

- Makes the referral for viability assessment
- Conducts a joint visit with the Fostering Service SW
- Arrange for parents to attend the Placement Planning meeting
- Attends the Placement Planning Meeting
- Contributes to the Delegated Authority Agreement
- Completes the child specific Risk Assessment
- Ensures that the carers have all essential placement documentation
- Visits the child in placement weekly until the first review

- Provides the Fostering Service with copies of Placement Documents and Risk Assessment
- Creates the placement on LCS using placement code U3
- Completes the sections of the Joint Assessment appertaining to the child
- Attends the Fostering Panel with the Fostering SW

Fostering Service Social Worker

- Conducts the viability visit with the CSC SW
- Completes Part 2 of the viability report – "The assessment"
- Attends the Placement Planning Meeting
- Provides finance with the cares bank details so payments can be set up
- Provides the Foster Carers Agreement for the carers to sign and retains a copy for the file
- Completes a child specific Safe Care Policy for the carers and retains a copy
- Provides the cares with a lockable box for confidential documents
- Books the assessment onto a fostering panel before the Reg 24 expiry date
- Completes the assessment and files this

Fostering Service PM

- Completes Part 3 of the viability report – "The Manager's Recommendation"
- Arranges and chairs the Placement Planning Meeting within 5 working days of the placement being approved

Fostering Service Senior Manager

- Completes Part 4 of the viability report – "The Decision"
- Circulates a PDF copy of the report to CSC, Fostering, Legal and Business Support
- Sets up the Carers as approved on LCS

Legal

Once in receipt of the Viability Assessment and confirmed Reg 24 Approval, legal will file with the Court, and serve on the parties. (The PWFFT/Fostering will already have agreed redactions with the subjects).

POSITIVE VIABILITY AND IMMEDIATE FURTHER ASSESSMENT

- Once Part 4 of the Connected Persons Viability Assessment has been completed, on the day of receipt of part 4 the PWFFT Team Manager will send the positive viability to the legal team and to the CSC Social Work Team.
- There would be a discussion between CSC and the PWFFT about the care plan and whether an SGO Assessment, Fostering Assessment or a Joint SGO & Fostering Assessment is appropriate.

- There would also be discussions about who the strongest subject(s) are if there have been multiple initial viability assessments and who should proceed to a full assessment.
- The PWFFT will [within 5 working days] produce a short position statement setting out for the Court and the Parties, the decision that has been taken as to the type of full assessment i.e. SGO Assessment, Fostering Assessment or a Joint SGO & Fostering Assessment and the reasons for that. It will also deal with reasons as to why (where there are multiple candidates for full assessment) those that have been selected to proceed to full assessment have been chosen and the others disregarded.
- The PWFFT will agree any redactions with the subject(s).
- The PWFFT Manager would then send the completed Connected Persons Viability Assessment to the CSC Social Worker and Practice Manager and to the Solicitor with conduct at Legal.
- Legal will file the viability (and any position statement) with the Court and serve on the subject(s). Redactions will be agreed with the subjects in advance and it is noted that it will only be in a very rare case that anything other than financial information will be redacted from any assessment.
NB: When a viability is positive and further assessment is agreed appropriate, a Permanence Planning Meeting may be called by the Placements with Family and Friends Team. This is to determine the persons to be assessed (the best options from a number of proposed carers) and the nature of assessment to be completed, in-line with the care plan. Also included in the meeting will be timescales for the completion of assessment, including the sections completed by CSC.
- If the Subject(s) withdraw for any reason, then the Form A will be completed to this effect and treated as if it were a negative viability assessment.

SPECIFIC NOTES IN RELATION TO SINGLE SGO ASSESSMENTS

- The PWFFT will be the lead on any referral but will work closely with CSC.
- The PWFFT will assess all prospective SG's provided that they have the capacity to do so.
- If they do not have capacity then the assessment will be referred back to CSC (confirmation to be sought as to which format for the report will be used CSC style or the new PWFFT report). I think it needs to be the new format for all assessments
- The Child's CSC Social Worker will assist the PWFFT in completing parts 4 and 5 of the SGO Assessment (as they will be more familiar with those aspects that pertain to the child).
- If the PWFFT are undertaking the assessment, they will also undertake the means test and produce the Reg 15 and 16 notices (however, it is noted that any financial remuneration is to be agreed by CSC). Support Plans should be drawn up in consultation with the SW CSC. **PWFFT will complete the sections relating to the Applicant including any financial support that they may be**

entitled to and they will then send this to the Child's Social Worker to complete the remaining sections of the Support Plan.

- All documents, including the Assessment, Financial Assessment, Reg 15, Reg 16 and Support Plan are to be sent to the relevant Manager for QA 5 working days prior to the filing date.
- Redactions are to be agreed between the SGs and the assessing Social Worker and a redacted version of the SGO assessment and Support Plan or a clear note of the redactions required provided to legal with the documents. It is noted that it will only be in a very rare case that anything other than financial information will be redacted from any assessment.
- If the PWFFT are assessing, they send the assessment and Reg 15 and Reg 16 Notices to legal for filing and serving. The Child's Social Worker will file the completed Support Plan including the approval from Head of Service for any allowance the applicant may be entitled to. This should be no less than one working day prior to the filing date.
- Legal will then serve the documents on the prospective Special Guardians and the parties (in accordance with any direction given by the Court).
- NB: The Special Guardianship Regulations require mandatory return of the Statutory Checks, Medical and DBS checks. The Local Authority cannot therefore submit an SGO Assessment or give an indication of any recommendation until this information is received from outside agencies. The Local Authority cannot file a contingent report whilst awaiting the outcome of these checks.

NB: It was also noted that there is to be a midpoint review at which any issues will be communicated from the PWFFT to CSC and legal and a position statement provided so that the Court and all parties could be updated if that was required.

15 February 2019