

## Children's Services

### Standards and additional guidance for placements with parents

#### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 This guidance concerns children and young people who are in the care of Dorset Council because they are subject to care or interim care orders, and placed with their parent(s) following recommendation of such a placement by a Child in Care Review.
- 1.2 Key statutory guidance in respect of placements with parents are the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 (amended 2015). The [relevant regulations are 17, 18, 19](#) which should be read together with [Schedule 3](#). The requirements are summarised in the tri.x procedure [Placement with Parents](#).

#### 2. Recommending placement with parents

- 2.1 Regulation 17 requires that, before deciding to place a child with their parents, there must be an assessment of the parent/s' suitability which will include:
  - the suitability of accommodation and of any other people over the age of 18 living in the household
  - the things set out in Schedule 3 of the regulations (which are the things you would look at in a parenting assessment) .

In addition, the social worker will need to consider whether the placement will be able to safeguard and promote the child's welfare and meet the child's needs as set out in the care plan. They will then need to review the child's care plan.

- 2.2 Once the necessary assessments have been carried out, the recommendation to place the child with parent/s needs to be approved by the Head of Locality and Strategy. In addition to the things set out above at paragraph 2.1, the social worker will need to include information about the child's wishes and feelings and consult with any allocated QUARO.

It is essential that the recommendation for placement with parents is clear, detailed and specific. The minutes of the meeting making the recommendation should set out:

- the aims of the placement
- what needs to happen, and what needs to change, for those aims to be met?

- how any risks to the placement will be monitored and wherever possible reduced
- the timescale for the placement

2.3 Sometimes it may be necessary to place a child with parents before the Regulation 17 assessments have been carried out. In this situation Regulation 19 provides that the social worker will need to:-

- interview the parent/s to obtain as much of the information set out above at paragraph 2.1 as possible before placing the child;
- make sure the assessment and review of the child's case is carried out within 10 working days of placement;
- make sure the decision by the nominated officer is made within 10 working days of the assessment work being completed;
- if the decision is to confirm the placement, review the placement plan;
- if the decision is not to confirm the placement, terminate the placement.

### **3. Social work visits to the child**

3.1 Once the relevant paperwork is completed, approved, and the child is placed with their parents, their social worker should visit them as required by Dorset's *Children's Social Work Practice Standards*:

- where an interim care order is in place, the child should be visited weekly until the first Child in Care Review, and fortnightly thereafter
- where a care order is in place, the child should be visited within one week of the order being made, and fortnightly thereafter

### **4. Reviewing the plan**

4.1 Where a child is placed with its parent(s), a Child in Care Review should be held every 3 months. Prior to each review, the allocated social worker should consider in discussion with the team manager whether it would be in the child's best interests to discharge the care order. In these circumstances, primary consideration should be given to:

- whether the original reasons for the order still apply
- whether the circumstances have altered in such a way that there is no longer a need for a care order

4.2 At each review meeting, consideration should be given as to whether an application should be made to discharge the care order.-If the social worker and team manager conclude that a change in circumstance warrants discharge of the care order at a time outside of the standard review timetable, consideration should be given to bringing forward the Child in Care Review. This should be

done in consultation with the Quality Assurance Reviewing Officer (QARO) and the parents.

- 4.3 If a decision is made at a review meeting that the care order should be discharged, there will then need to be a legal meeting about whether the necessary criteria are satisfied to make an application. Any proposed application will then have to be approved by Leadership Oversight Meeting.
- 4.4 The need for social work or financial support through boarding-out or other allowances should not in themselves preclude the discharge of a care order; the social worker should look at other ways to provide these forms of support once the order has been discharged.
- 4.5 Where the original timescale set out for the placement with parents has lapsed, or will shortly lapse, and there is a proposal to extend this, it is important to agree a revised proposed end date for the arrangement. This needs to be considered alongside whether it would be appropriate for the care order to be discharged and whether the child / family can be adequately supported in some other way, for instance through a supervision order and / or under a child in need plan.
- 4.6 Where the standard of care by the parents is not good enough, consideration should be given to an alternative placement for the child.

## **5. Leadership Oversight for the plan**

While the child on a care order remains in the care of their parents, the arrangement should be considered at Leadership Oversight on a six-monthly basis to ensure scrutiny.

## **6. Escalation**

The QARO will retain a close focus on these arrangements and consider escalation if plans do not progress at pace.