



**SOCIAL SERVICES AND HOUSING
DIRECTORATE**

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW

AUTHOR: Sam Nathan
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THE PURPOSE OF REVIEW

The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 3 states that a review is "...a continuous process of planning and reconsideration of the plans for the child." In other words, it is about looking back on the child's progress (reviewing) and forward to the future (planning).

The practical manifestation of the above is the review of the child's Care Plan, celebrate their achievements and plan for the next stage of their development. The reviewing process must ensure the welfare of the child is paramount, with the review meeting being child-friendly and focussed. This will ensure that children and young people can meaningfully participate in their reviews. There should be no surprises at reviews where issues are raised that are unknown to the Chair or participants. While reviews are a key decision-making forum they are not part of line management supervision, a forum to deal with complaints or an opportunity for adults/professionals to verbally chastise children and young people or even each other.

THE ROLE OF REVIEWING OFFICERS

Reviewing Officers do not have line management responsibilities for the Social Workers and children and young people being reviewed which allows, as stated in the Guidance, for "...a degree of oversight and objectivity to the monitoring of the responsible authority's practise and decision-making in relation to the plan for the child." This Quality Assurance role includes monitoring activities such as ensuring children and young people's participation, the Looked After Children (LAC) material is completed and up to date, including the Care Plan, statutory visits are being undertaken, health and educational needs are being addressed, appropriate consultation has taken place and so on.

The other primary role of the Reviewing Officer, besides chairing the review meeting, is to ensure the children looked after are at the centre of any plans and that they actively participate in review meetings be it by attending, completing a consultation paper, using the "Viewpoint" software package, providing an audio tape, doing a drawing or in whatever way they want to express their wishes and feelings. As one looked after child recently stated, "It is not about having the say, it is about having a say."

The Reviewing Officer is also responsible for ensuring at the end of each review meeting the date, time and venue of subsequent reviews are fully discussed and, as far as possible, agreed by the key participants including the child or young person.

The reviewing service also manages the reviewing process with the Administrative Support Worker for Looked After Children, provides consultation to professionals regarding looked after children and publish an annual report focusing on areas of progress, where further work needs to take place and outcomes for this group of children and young people.

While the Reviewing Officers chair the vast majority of reviews, where a child or young person is linked to prospective adopters the Team Manager, Family Placement Team will chair those reviews.

THE FREQUENCY OF REVIEWS

The Regulations set out the maximum intervals that may separate reviews.

1. The first review should take place no later than 28 days after the date on which the child began to be looked after.
2. The second review three months later.
3. The third and subsequent reviews are six months later.

As noted above these are maximum statutory intervals and can be brought forward where there has been a major change in the Care Plan e.g. an unplanned change of placement. Where children or young people are in mainland agency placements it may be considered appropriate to hold reviews more frequently to avoid the child's sense of being isolated, ensure they are well cared for and the Care Plan is being adhered to.

RESPITE, SHORT-TERM BREAKS AND FAMILY LINK

A child/young person who visits their carer or Beaulieu for 24 hours or more at any one time is "accommodated" under section 20. Regulation nine provides for a series of short-term breaks that should not exceed four weeks at any one time. Clearly where a child/young person is receiving one of these services, as well as being looked after full time, the reviews will be integrated.

The arranging of these reviews will take place as described below although the first review will take place within three months with the subsequent reviews taking place six monthly thereafter.

ARRANGING THE REVIEW MEETINGS

It is the responsibility of the Social Worker/Team Manager to inform, in sufficient time, the Administrative Support Worker for Looked After Children (based at Children's Service Centre) of the need for a first review. If this has not already happened the Placement Planning Meeting held within 14 days of a child's placement should check that a review has been requested.

At the end of the first review meeting the Reviewing Officer will agree a date and venue for the next review, if it is needed. The reviewing service will thereafter remind and arrange with the child's Social Worker subsequent reviews one month before they are due.

When a review has to be arranged the Social Worker must contact the Administrative Support Worker for Looked After Children to let her know, or confirm if it is the second or subsequent review, who to invite and the venue.

The Administrative Support Worker will contact by letter, phone or fax participants for the review, with letters and consultation papers sent to children, carers and those with parental responsibility.

CONSULTATION AND ATTENDANCE AT REVIEW MEETINGS

The Social Worker needs to consider who should be consulted as part of the review process, e.g., education colleagues, legal services, LACES team and so on and who should be invited to the review meeting. The consultation could include a discussion about possible attendance, or providing a report for the review meeting.

If for whatever reason the Social Worker is unsure about who to consult or invite they should discuss this with their Team Manager and/or The Reviewing Officer.

It is known from research that children and young people find it harder to participate if the meeting is large with a number of professionals unknown to them. It is crucial that the right balance is struck between ensuring key participants attending the review while at the same time small enough for the children and young people not to feel intimidated and overwhelmed.

The review meeting must include members of the child or young person's key group. This would routinely include:

1. The child or young person.
2. The child or young person's carer(s).
3. The child or young person's Social Worker.
4. Relevant family member(s).
5. The Reviewing Officer/Chair.

THE CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON

Including a child at the review meeting concerning them is dependent on their age and level of understanding. Those under 8 years of age are unlikely to be able to meaningfully participate or benefit from the meeting. The child or young person's participation should be as positive an experience as possible and certainly not a negative or harmful one. The Social Worker should consult with the child or young person if they wish to have someone with them, as the Guidance states to "...provide friendly support..." this may be, for example, an advocate, Children's Participation Officer, a friend or someone to translate if English is not their first language.

There should be an assumption that the views of a child with a disability will be sought in whatever way it is felt to be appropriate given their age and level of understanding. Attendance for part or all of the review should also be

considered as long as it is a meaningful and positive experience for the child/young person. An excellent example of this approach is the work undertaken by Beaulieu and Social Services staff to seek the views of the child/young person and in some cases aid the child/young person to attend all or part of the review.

The child or young person should be informed by their Social worker that they can meet with the Chair prior to the review meeting, if they wish.

SOCIAL SERVICES STAFF

The Social Worker must consider if other Social Services staff need to attend, for example, their Team Manager, Fostering Service Support Worker or Independent Support Project Worker.

While Team Managers are not routinely expected to attend review meetings their participation is vital if, for example, key decisions are likely to be made or if it is anticipated that the meeting will be contentious or difficult.

Similarly Fostering Services Support Workers are not routinely expected to attend review meetings unless they have a specific contribution to make, for example, providing key information or supporting a new or inexperienced carer(s).

FAMILY MEMBERS

The Social Worker must also consider which family members should attend and if they would want support, for example, from the Advocacy Consortium. Family members should be offered the opportunity to meet with the Chair, especially if it is their first time at a review meeting. The Chair could ensure they are aware of the purpose of the meeting, the agenda, any issues and concerns they may wish to raise and so on. Family members who should be included are those:

1. Who have significant involvement in the care and welfare of the child or young person.
2. Who can make a positive contribution to celebrate the child or young person's achievements and aid the planning for their future.
3. Whose attendance is not against the child or young person's wishes. In these circumstances other arrangements should be considered with the Reviewing Officer, for example, a separate meeting or meeting with the Reviewing Officer and Social Worker after the review meeting to inform the parent(s) of the main issues and outcomes.

EXCLUSION FROM REVIEW MEETING

The Guidance states that attendance of children or young people and their parents should be "...the norm rather than the exception..." Professionals and

other participants at reviews should be able to share information, make decisions and focus on the needs of the child or young person in a safe, non-threatening environment. Following consultation with others, the decision to exclude a particular person(s) is the Chairs.

Parent(s)/Carer(s) will be excluded from all or part of the review if:

1. Their attendance would result in intimidation and/or physical threat to any person(s) attending.
2. There was evidence that they would disrupt the meeting.
3. They became verbally abusive or threatening during the meeting.
4. Attendance of one would prevent the attendance of the other.
5. There is a legal order preventing contact with others present.
6. There is a need to hear third party information.

Those excluded should be advised by the Reviewing Officer in writing with the reasons for their exclusion. The Reviewing Officer will note this decision in the review report. The Chair will decide, following discussion with the Social Worker, if the excluded person's representative, eg. Solicitor should be allowed to attend or present a statement on their behalf and if they will receive a copy of all or part of the review report. It may be appropriate for the excluded person(s) to be asked to complete a consultation paper that could be read out at the review meeting.

INTEGRATION OF STATUTORY AND FORMAL MEETINGS

Social Services staff, professionals from partner agencies, parents, carers and increasingly children and young people are expected to attend a variety of meetings to comply with statutory and organisational requirements. Meetings focussing on different aspects of the needs of children and young people besides statutory reviews include child protection conferences, core group meetings, annual education statementing reviews, individual education plans, pathway plans and personal education plans specifically for children looked after. While each of these processes and meetings focus on specific issues there are areas of overlapping agendas which should lead to consideration of integrating the meetings. A clear example of this is the annual statementing reviews which could be integrated with the PEPs and reviews. Another example could be the integration of child protection conferences/core group meetings and reviews.

Where integration of meetings could take place the Social Worker and Team Manager should first discuss this possibility and get agreement from the respective Chairs, for example the Reviewing Officer and Education staff member, who will need to integrate their respective processes.

REVIEWS AND PERSONAL EDUCATION PLANS (PEPS)

In May 2000 the DFES and DOH published Guidance requiring Local Authorities to have PEPS for all Looked After Children. The first should be prepared within 20 days i.e., in time for the first review.

If the PEP meeting has not taken place when the review is being set up this should be arranged to occur just prior to the review meeting. If this is not possible, for example, due to school holidays, the Reviewing Officer will ensure that a date for the first PEP is agreed at the review.

At the first PEP meeting consideration will be given to the possibility of integrating the review of the PEP within the subsequent statutory review meetings. The criteria for making such decisions include: -

1. The views of the child/young person about integrating these two processes. Local research shows that while some children/young people are able to manage this integration others struggle with larger meetings and teaching staff knowing about their personal and family life.
2. The views of the child/young person's key group including parents/carers, teaching staff and other professionals.
3. The level of complexity/ contentiousness of the education plan. Clearly long involved detailed discussions of an education plan needs a separate meeting.
4. Practical issues such as availability of key staff, issues of location of meeting(s), different statutory time frames and school holidays will all impact on the possibility of integrating these two processes.

On completion of the education plan the Social Worker must send a copy to those invited to the meeting, including the child/young person and the Looked After Children's Education Co-Coordinator.

PRE-REVIEW CONSULTATION

While making arrangements for the review meeting with the Administrative Support Worker for LAC the Social Worker should also discuss with her a time and venue for a pre-review consultation with the Chair. These consultations will routinely take place just prior to the review meeting. The purpose of this consultation is:

1. For the Chair with the Social Worker to ensure that, as far as possible, the review meeting is as positive and constructive event for the child or young person and the other participants.
2. For the Chair to view the blue LAC file and ensure that all the LAC material has been completed and is up to date.

3. To ensure all the previous review decisions have been acted upon and if not when and who will take responsibility for actioning them, assuming they are still relevant.
4. To confirm the agenda and be made aware of any issues that may be contentious or need managing sensitively.

THE REVIEW MEETING

The agenda for the review meeting is in accordance with the Guidance and the “Issues For Discussion” as found in the Review of Arrangements form. Other matters for discussion may also be raised with the Chair by the review participants.

While the age and particular circumstances of the child or young person being considered will influence what is discussed, the agenda will always include:

1. Have all the decisions reached at the last review been acted upon?
2. Has a Core Assessment been completed and/or are the Assessment and Action Records to be completed?
3. An opportunity for the child or young person’s views to be heard and considered as well as the key group sharing their views on the child or young person’s achievements, progress and what further support and guidance they may need in the future.
4. Discussion of the child/young person’s health plan in an holistic manner that as well as addressing their physical needs consider their emotional, social and cultural needs. The child or young person’s basic health status will be considered, i.e., immunisations, dental care and the need for a Health Assessment. At the second review, where it is planned that the child or young person is to remain looked after, the Chair will give the foster carer a BAAF Health Booklet which the carer should hold and complete. This allows for medical information to be held in one place and not lost. Where possible the child/young person should be actively involved in maintaining the booklet.
5. Discussion of the child/young person education/training/employment and leisure needs.
6. Discussion of the contact arrangements with family and friends.
7. Consideration of the child/young person’s legal status and whether they need to continue to be looked after.

The above agenda will be added to in the review if, for example, considering the needs of an older young person and developing their pathway plan.

The agenda for a child/young person receiving short-term breaks generally be narrower focussing primarily on the need for the arrangement to continue by seeking the views of the key participants including the child/young person, education and health. Clearly, if necessary, this agenda can be added to.

The review meeting will end with the Chair summarising:

1. What decisions have been made and agreed.
2. Who will implement the decisions and within what timescales.

Following discussion a time and venue for the next review meeting, that meets the needs of the child/young person to encourage their on-going participation, will be agreed.

PERMANENCE PLANNING

The National Adoption Standards for England state that: “The second and every subsequent review of a looked after child will consider permanence. Where adoption is the plan, reviews will evaluate the success of the plan in meeting the child’s needs and specify any new objectives required to meet those needs.”

In line with these standards, even where adoption is not being considered, the Chair at the second and subsequent reviews will consider the plan, for example, be it for reunification with family or long-term fostering.

AFTER THE REVIEW MEETING

The Reviewing Officer will complete the ‘Record of Discussion’ and ‘Review Decisions’, keeping a copy for the records, and return this and all related documentation to the Social Worker for the LAC file. The Social Worker will check the recording for inaccuracies or disagreements, contacting the Chair if there has been any. It is the decision of the Chair what is changed or not in the report, with the Chair however noting the disagreement, for example, by adding it to the report as the views of a participant.

If the recording is accurate the Social Worker will ensure that the report is : -

1. Read and signed by their Team Manager.
2. Sent out to those who attended the review meeting, including the child/young person, as well as those who should receive a copy but could not attend, for example, those with parental responsibility.

The Chair will aim to return the report to the Social Worker within 10 working days of the review meeting. The Social Worker will aim to send out the report five working days following receipt from the Chair.

Where there are concerns about accuracy or disagreements about the review report from a child/young person, their family or other professionals they will be dealt with by the Chair in consultation with the Social Worker.

FEEDBACK, SUGGESTIONS AND COMPLAINTS

The reviewing service welcomes feedback and positive suggestions for improving the reviewing process be it from the child/young person, family, foster carers, Social Services staff or other professionals.

In line with the Authority's Complaint's procedure a child/young person and their family must be informed of what they need to do if they have a concern or wish to make a complaint.

SAM NATHAN
Reviewing Manager

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2nd Draft