When your child is looked after

Information for parents on the Looked After Children System

Social Services

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA
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When your child is looked after you are still involved in their care

We will work with you to plan your child’s care.

You will get written documents saying what is happening to your child and how they are getting on.

You can tell us what you think about how your child is looked after.

Certain things, like consent for medical procedures, will still need your permission.
Introduction

While your child is looked after by the local authority, we want to work with you to make sure they get the care they need and that you would want them to have. The system for looking after children is usually referred to as LAC (Looking After Children). The LAC system guides what happens to your child while they are looked after, including your involvement in the placement.

Parents who are new to the LAC (Looked After Children) System can find some of the words used confusing, and may wonder what all the paperwork is for. This leaflet explains some of the processes and activities that happen as part of the LAC system.

If there is anything you do not understand, or are not sure about, please ask the social worker who will be happy to explain.

Children may be looked after under a voluntary arrangement or following the making of a court order. Each case will be different, so there will be differences in the way parents take part in their children’s lives. However, the information in this leaflet applies to all children regardless of their legal status.

The LAC system also helps all those involved in your child’s care – carers, local authority staff, doctors and teachers – know all they need to about your child’s care. The system also helps us to listen to your wishes as a parent, and to those of your child.
When your child is looked after

You will be asked for basic essential information about your child. This includes family details and who to contact, and information about your child’s health and educational history.

This is needed to help carers look after your child and is recorded in a document called the *Referral and Information Record*. You will be given a copy of this Record.

What can you expect?

When your child is looked after you can expect:

- To be involved in discussions about how your child will be looked after
- To sign your agreement to your child’s placement
- To be given copies of the information recorded about your child and their placement
- That carers and workers will keep in touch with you about how your child is getting on
- To be involved in Review meetings and any planning for your child

It is important that you remain fully involved with your child’s care during the time they are looked after by the local authority, so that we can all work together in the best interests of your child.
Placements

Where your child lives while they are looked after is called a *Placement*. Children who are looked after may live with foster carers, in a children’s home or with other family members.

Where your child is placed may depend on a number of things. These include the sort of care and support your child needs, what placements are available and the wishes of you and your child.

There will be a *Placement Information Record* which includes your agreement that your child is looked after, consent for medical treatment and the arrangements for you to have contact with your child.

It also contains details of your child’s everyday care needs such as dietary needs, health matters and school information. Those who are caring for your child are given a copy of this information.

Plans

The *Care Plan* is the key document that explains to everyone involved how your child is being looked after. It includes the reasons why they are being looked after, what the plan for the future is and who needs to do what for your child.

A *Personal Education Plan* (PEP) will also be made for children who are looked after for 4 weeks or more. This is to ensure that children have the right support with their schooling and to record their progress and achievement.

Arrangements to see your child

When your child is looked after, arrangements will normally be made for you to see them regularly. This is referred to as *contact*. If there are brothers or sisters who are not looked after in the same placement, there will also be contact arrangements for these.
Review meetings

If your child is looked after for 4 weeks or more a **LAC Review Meeting** will be held.

A LAC Review is a formal meeting where people with an interest in your child’s wellbeing come together to talk about the Care Plan, and usually about the Personal Education Plan too. In most cases you and your child will be present. The meeting is chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) who will hear about the care that your child is receiving and decide whether the Care Plan needs to change in any way.

Before a Review Meeting you will be asked for your thoughts and opinions. Usually you will be sent a LAC Consultation Document which you should fill in and return to the Independent Reviewing Officer. This will also help you prepare for the meeting. If you need help to fill it in, just ask the social worker.

The discussion and decisions that happen in the Review Meeting will be written down in a document called the Review Form. You will normally receive a copy of this even if you do not attend the Review Meeting.

There will be regular LAC Review Meetings while your child is in care. For most children the first Review will take place one month after the placement starts, the second will take place three months after the first and then every six months if the child continues to be looked after.
The role of the Independent Reviewing Officer

The Independent Reviewing Officer is in charge of the LAC Review Meeting and monitors the way that the Local Authority looks after your child. He or she ensures that your child’s views are understood and taken into account. The Independent Reviewing Officer also ensures that when the Care Plan states that some action has to be taken, it is clear who is to do what. If arrangements are not carried out in the way that has been agreed, the Independent Reviewing Officer has the power to report this to senior staff in the local authority or even to the courts.

Advocacy Services

Advocacy is about listening to children and young people, helping them to make their voice heard and enabling them to take part in making decisions about the things which affect them. Advocates operate independently of the local authority. As well as providing informal advice to children, an advocate may represent a child’s views at a Review Meeting or in court.

Advocacy services locally are provided by Tros Gynnal.

Your Personal Information

When you are in touch with Social Services, we will keep information about you in written records and computer files. We will keep this information confidential, except where we need to share it with people providing you with care, or to protect you or other people.

You have a right to ask to see records we keep about you. We can give you more information about how we handle personal information. Phone 01792 636693 for the factsheet Your Personal Information.
Comments and Complaints

We welcome any comments about our services – good or bad. We are interested to hear how we could do things better, and we like to know when we are doing well.

If you are unhappy with the services you receive, we encourage you to make a complaint. Full details are given in the factsheet ‘Making a comment, complaint or compliment about Social Services’. For more advice or information about making a complaint, you can contact our Complaints Officers on 01792 637345.

Useful Telephone Numbers

Social Services

If your child is looked after you will be given a direct line contact number for Social Services. Write this number here.

If you don’t have this phone number, and you need to contact us, please ring:

Children’s Central Advice, Referral and Assessment Team 📞 01792 635700

Advocacy Services

Tros Gynnal 📞 01656 669354 or 0800 328 7289 (young person’s freephone number)

This information is also available in alternative formats such as large print, audio CD, in Braille or electronically. Please phone 01792 636693 to request an alternative format.