



**FINDING A HOME FOR A CHILD IN OUR CARE**



## 1. Home Required in an Emergency (Same Day)

### **For children being brought into care in an emergency (same day):**

Approval from the Director of Children's Social Care is required before any child is brought into care in an emergency (same day):

- A Decision-Making Form must be completed by the relevant Children's Social Care Team and shared with the responsible Head of Service to seek approval for a same day search to commence. The Head of Service will then confirm with ART that the approval has been given.
- The Decision-Making Form shared by the Head of Service for the child and should be sent to the:
  - Director of Children's Social Care
  - Head of Service for Fostering and Residential
  - Head of Service for CIOC
  - Senior Commissioning Manager
- A Head of Service/ Director level meeting is scheduled to take place that afternoon with invitations sent to the Director and the above Heads of Service. The Access to Resources Team (ART) should also be invited to the meeting if it is felt that finding a new home is likely to be difficult.
- At the meeting, the responsible Head of Service will present the case and a decision will be made.

### **For children already in care but who require an emergency (same day) move:**

Where a provider has advised that a child has to move out of their current home that day, this should be challenged and ART should be contacted immediately. A stability meeting should be set up at the earliest opportunity between the Social Worker, Team Manager, ART and the provider. All options to avoid a child needing to move out of the home that day should be considered. Only in exceptional circumstances will this be accepted.

Where it has not been possible to avoid a child needing to move out of their current home on the same day, any safe, alternative options for the child to stay with a family member/ connected person should be explored. Only where there are no safe, alternative options should an emergency same day search for a new home be considered.

Head of Service approval is required before any search for an emergency (same day) home can commence and Director approval is required for the same day move to take place:



- A Decision-Making Form must be completed by the relevant Children's Social Care Team and shared with the responsible Head of Service to seek approval for a same day search to commence. The Head of Service will then confirm with ART that the approval has been given.
- The Decision-Making Form shared by the Head of Service for the child and should be sent to the:
  - Director of Children's Social Care
  - Head of Service for Fostering and Residential
  - Head of Service for CIOC
  - Senior Commissioning Manager
- A Head of Service/ Director level meeting is scheduled to take place that afternoon with invitations sent to the Director and the above Heads of Service. The Access to Resources Team (ART) should also be invited to the meeting if it is felt that finding a new home is likely to be difficult.
- At the meeting, the responsible Head of Service will present the case and a decision will be made.

To aid prompt communication across all parties for same day home searches, ART will invite all relevant colleagues to a group Teams chat.

### Request for a New Home

Where a decision has been made that a child requires a new home (either because they need to come into care or they need to move homes), the Social Worker should complete a *My Home My Place* form following approval from the Head of Service. This should be prioritised and completed promptly, to allow as much time as possible to find a suitable new home (e.g. **within 5 working days** when a child has been asked to move out of their current home within 28 days; or as soon as possible if they need to move in less than 28 days).

It is important that time is invested to make sure that the information included in the form is the best it can be, to maximise the chances of finding the right home for a child. Please see **Top Tips for Writing a Good Referral**.



top\_tip\_good\_referral  
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Once completed, the Social Worker should send the *My Home My Place* form to their Team Manager to quality assure and approve. Where it is recognised that a new home is likely to be difficult to find, the *My Home My Place* form should also be sent to the Senior Manager to quality assure and approve.



Once approved, the *My Home My Place* form should be sent to the CLA Placements Team LCS work tray. The Access to Resources Team (ART) will screen the request form. If information is missing or more information is needed, the form will be returned to the Social Worker with an email explaining what is required. Urgent cases will also be followed up with a phone call. Where a form is considered by ART to be of poor quality, the relevant Head of Service will be copied into the email.

If the request is for a same day search, ART will require evidence that Head of Service level approval has been given.

If education or therapy is being requested as part of a child's home, ART will require evidence that agreement to search for a home which includes education or therapy has been obtained from health or education (SEND/ Virtual School) or a Children's Social Care Senior Manager before commencing the search.

The *My Home My Place* form will be sent to the relevant In-House Team and to agency providers for consideration at the same time, in most circumstances. An agency foster care search will NOT commence for a child aged 0-8 years unless:

- the child has complex health needs
- the request is for a large sibling group (3 or more children) to be placed together
- An In-House Manager confirms that they have exhausted all options and no In-House foster carers are available

It is expected that children aged 0-8 who require a foster home will be placed In-House. Director level approval is required for any child aged 0-8 to move to an agency foster carer. Head of Service approval is required for any child aged under 13 to move into a children's home.

ART will send the *My Home My Place* form to agency providers, with a covering email, which includes a summary of the child (as included in *All About Me* section of the *My Home My Place* form) and what type of home is required. Emails will be sent to providers in the following required contractual order (unless the home is required in an emergency):

- Block contract and Tier 1 providers first
- Tier 2 / Tier 3 providers
- Placements North West (regional) contracted providers
- Off contract providers



ART will contact providers by phone if suitable offers of new homes are not being put forward and there may be occasions where Children's Social Care colleagues will be asked to support this.

ART may request permission from the Children's Social Care Team to expand the perimeters of the search. This may include widening the location of the search, for example.

ART must be notified immediately when a search for a new home is no longer required.

## 2. Offers of a New Home

ART will check that any offers received are in line with any commissioning arrangement expectations and will check registration details etc.

Any enquiries or potential offers from providers require prompt attention. In the current very challenging market, if offers and queries are not responded to promptly, there is a high risk that the home could be lost to another young person/ Local Authority.

ART will copy the relevant approver (as set out in the section below) into any offers of new homes that are sent to the Social Worker so they are aware that an offer has been submitted and they may be asked to make a funding decision for this new home.

The social worker/ team manager/ some else who knows the child well must respond to questions from a provider or contact the provider for a further discussion about the offer **within two hours**.

When considering the suitability of an offer of a new home, the social worker should contact the relevant registered manager of the home directly to discuss the potential home further. This should take place **on the same day** that an offer has been received.

Wherever possible, the child's social worker should visit potential homes and as required consult with other professionals, prior to a decision about the appropriateness of a placement being made. The provider should be able to provide evidence that supports the appropriateness and effectiveness of any therapeutic approach or model of care they intend to use.

Social Workers must prioritise considering In-House offers first. Robust reasons must be given if an In-House offer is to be declined. Offers from Block contact and



Tier 1 providers should be considered next. Where more than one agency offer is received from any other provider, ART will share the lower cost options with Social Workers for consideration first. Robust reasons must be given if a lower cost agency offer is being declined and a higher cost offer accepted.

All offers that have been put forward and considered for a child must be included on the decision-making form when seeking approval for the preferred home, and a clear rationale provided about why the home has been chosen and other options have been rejected.

### 3. Identification and Approval of a New Home

Once a decision has been made by the Children's Social Care Team about which offer of a new home is the most suitable, a Decision Making Form must be completed and submitted to the relevant approver as set out below:

- **TEAM MANAGER:** Foster home costing £1,000 per week or less
- **TEAM MANAGER:** New home where costs remain the same or less
- **SENIOR MANAGER:** New home where costs are below £4,000 per week
- **HEAD OF SERVICE FOR FAAS and FS** - between £4000 and £5000
- **HEAD OF SERVICE FOR CIOC** (even if young person is in a different Service):  
New home where costs are between £5,000 and £7,000 per week
- **DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN SOCIAL CARE:** New home where costs exceed £7,000 per week

A cost breakdown for the new home will be requested from the provider and will be shared by the Commissioning Team with the relevant decision maker, along with a benchmarked fair cost of care, using the nationally recognised *Care Cubed* tool.

ART must be notified of the offer that is being accepted and provided with evidence that the correct approvals are in place. Where applicable ART should also be provided with the reason why other offers have not been chosen so timely feedback can be given to providers. This will allow ART to provide timely feedback to providers, issue an Individual Placement Agreement (IPA) and input the costs onto the system.



The IPA identifies the weekly fees to be paid to the provider, alongside any additional costs agreed at the time of the new home being agreed. The IPA should be signed by both the provider and Senior Manager, within 5 days, in most cases.

Whenever costs change (increase or decrease), ART must be notified immediately and a case note must be put onto a child's file clearly setting out the reason for the new cost, start date and expected duration (if applicable) and include evidence of the correct management approvals. No increased cost can be agreed with a provider without the correct management approval in place and must be given in writing.

Please note that any requests for additional staffing or bed blocking should be forwarded to ART so the costs can be checked and negotiated if they are considered to be excessive.

Any additional costs should be regularly reviewed – at least every three months.

