

Guidance Document **Decision to Place Children in Residential Care**

The decision to place children in a residential care setting needs careful consideration and emergency placements should be avoided wherever possible. It can be a real struggle for children to live in a group setting with many adult carers and other young people with complex needs. In order to grow into healthy adults children need to learn about family life and develop a sense of belonging and this can be best met in foster care if living with their own family is not an option. For some young people residential care can be a positive choice and can offer the necessary support and intervention at particular times that carers would not be able to provide in a family home.

All fostering options should be considered in the first instance (unless there is a safeguarding reason why this would not be appropriate/or we feel the child may pose a significant risk to carers) including specialist foster placements which are supported to manage children who might otherwise need a residential placement.

All foster placements can be supported to help carers manage some of the more complex and challenging behaviours:

ARC/TYS intervention
CAMHS support
Regular respite.

A clear assessment of need should be completed which highlights the desired outcomes for the child and how these will be achieved. The assessment should include analysis of the type of care that would best meet their needs.

As outlined above, in the first instance all consideration must be given to placing in foster care and if this is not an option due to lack of availability/exceptional circumstances the reasons should be clearly identified. These may include the following:

1. Multiple previous foster care breakdowns
2. Harmful behaviours which require a level of supervision/intervention that could not be replicated in a family setting. This may include:
 - a) Sexually harmful behaviours
 - b) Substance misuse issues
 - c) Mental health issues that require specialist treatment and intervention which cannot be provided by local CAMHS or other available day services.
 - d) Children with repeated missing episodes and /or who are being sexually exploited. In these cases sometimes a period of time away from their community and presenting risks can support the child to feel safe and recover from their experiences.

If the above criteria are satisfied the plan (including the exit plan) must be signed off by the relevant Head of Service before brokerage are approached. The Assistant Director for Specialist Services must ratify all requests to place in residential.

The referral form should clearly indicate the reasons for placement and planned outcomes.

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