

## Care Planning: The social work task for looked after children

*Sue Lane, July 2009*

### Legislation and Guidance

- Children Act 1989 Guidance Vol 1 Court Orders (DCSF 2008)
- Vol 3 (Family Placements) and Vol 4 Residential Placements DOH 1991 (More recent guidance has replaced parts of these volumes and remainder are due to be updated)
- Independent Reviewing Officers Guidance (Adoption and Children Act )DFES (2004)
- All of above are Regulation and Guidance issued under S7 Local Authority Social Services Act 1970
  
- **Children Act 2004**
  - Duty to cooperate on all bodies including health(S10)
  - Duty to consult the child about decisions and actions
  
- **Children and Young Persons Act 2008**
  - Further strengthening of IRO role

### Care Plan Requirements

- First completed prior to entry or within 14 days in emergency and includes:
  - Personal Education Plan (DoH 2000)
  - Health Plan (DoH 2002+and draft guidance 2009)
  
- Placement Plan
- Review within 28 days of entry; 3 months then 6 monthly
- Review records Part 1 and Part 2
- Notification of decisions within 14 days
- IRO to be informed of changes in interim
- 16+ becomes 'Pathway Plan

### An effective care plan will

- Identify intended outcomes for the child and set objectives for work with the child, the birth family and the carers in relation to the child's developmental needs, which are:
  - health
  - education
  - emotional and behavioural development

- identity
- family and social relationships
- social presentation
- self care skills

(DFES 2004 p10)

## **Key role of Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO)**

- Registered social worker experienced in children's social care
- Independent of the management of the child's case
- Independent of the resources allocated to that case.
- Authoritative role in assuring the quality of a local authority's case planning
- Influence outcomes for significant numbers of children and able to have overview of what the issues are in the authority to inform service commissioning
- Often more stable person for individual children than social worker

## **Guiding Principles for Reviews**

- What have been the outcomes of the last review?
- Is a new assessment of need called for?
- Has the care plan been called into question by developments?
- Do its objectives need to be reformulated?
- Or is it a question of choosing new means to achieve the same ends?
- How integrated does the care plan now appear?
- How is the principle of sensitive, open and shared planning being upheld?
- How cogent is the planning process?
- How is the current planning process being recorded so that it can be monitored as part of a flexible but continuous long term process?

## **Implications for LACYP-PDG**

- Effective care planning helps children to be in safe and secure care
- IRO is a key role that should be identified as having influence on outcomes for both the individual and groups of looked after children
- Actions this group proposes need to be linked to objectives of care planning and to systems for care planning rather than extra tasks sitting outside those requirements
- S7/S10 Guidance needs to be consolidated and updated with better attention to all health concerns
- Guidance promised to reflect CA 2004/CYP 2008

- Duty to cooperate on other bodies eg PCT/Health Trusts;
- Duty to secure sufficient accommodation within area
- Strengthened role of IRO:
  - Local authorities to appoint a named IRO for each looked after child
  - IROs to monitor the local authority's performance of its functions in relation to the child's case
  - IROs to ensure that any ascertained wishes and feelings of the child concerning the case are given due consideration by the local authority