



Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults' procedures

Looked After Children

Policy statement

Early years settings are committed to providing quality provision based on equality of opportunity for all children and their families. All staff members are committed to doing all they can to enable 'looked after' children in their care to achieve and reach their full potential.

We recognise that children who are being looked after have often experienced traumatic situations; physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect. However, we also recognise that not all looked after children have experienced abuse and that there are a range of reasons for children to be taken in to the care of the local authority. Whatever the reason, a child's separation from their home and family signifies a disruption in their lives that has impact on their emotional well-being.

In our Pre-School, we place emphasis on promoting *children's right to be strong, resilient and listened to*. Our policy and practice guidelines for looked after children are based on the two important concepts, *attachment and resilience*. The basis of this is to promote secure attachments in children's lives as the basis for resilience. These aspects of well-being underpin the child's responsiveness to learning and are the basis in developing positive dispositions for learning.

For young children to get the most out of educational opportunities they need to be settled enough with their carer to be able to cope with further separation, a new environment and new expectations made upon them.

Principles

- The term 'looked after child' denotes a child's current legal status; this term is never used to categorise a child as standing out from others.
- We do not offer placements for babies and children under two years who are in care
- We offer places for funded two, three and four-year-old children who are in care to ensure they receive their entitlement to early education.
- Where a child who normally attends our setting is taken into care and is cared for by a local foster carer we will continue to offer the placement for the child.
- Every child is allocated a key person before they start and this is no different for a looked after child. The designated person ensures the key person has the information, support and training necessary to meet the looked after child's needs

Two-year-olds

- Places will be offered to two-year-old children who are looked after; where the placement in the setting will normally last a minimum of three months.
- Where the child is already in attendance and has a secure attachment with an existing key person a continuation of the existing place will be offered.

Three- and four-year-olds

- Places will be offered for funded children who are looked after; where the placement in the setting will normally last a minimum of six weeks.
- If a child who attends a setting is taken into care and is cared for by a local carer the place will continue to be made available to the child.

Procedures

- The Pre-School recognises the role of the local authority social care department as the child's 'corporate parent' and the key agency in determining what takes place with the child. Nothing changes, especially with regard to the birth parent's or foster carer's role in relation to the Pre-School without prior discussion and agreement with the child's social worker.
- At the start of a placement there is a professionals meeting that will determine the objectives of the placement.
- A Personal Education Plan (PEP) for children over 3 years old is put in place within 10 days of the child becoming looked after.
- Following this meeting, a care plan for looked after children form is completed. The care plan is reviewed after two weeks, six weeks, three months, and thereafter at three to six monthly intervals.

- The care plan needs to consider such issues for the child as:
 - the child's emotional needs and how they are to be met;
 - how any emotional issues and problems that affect behaviour are to be managed;
 - the child's sense of self, culture, language/s and identity – how this is to be supported;
 - the child's need for sociability and friendship;
 - the child's interests and abilities and possible learning journey pathway;
 - how any special needs will be supported.
 - how information will be shared with the foster carer and local authority (as the 'corporate parent') as well as what information is shared with whom and how it will be recorded and stored;
 - what written reporting is required;
- The settling-in process for the child is agreed. It should be the same as for any other child, with the foster carer taking the place of the parent, unless otherwise agreed. It is even more important that the 'proximity' stage is followed until it is visible that the child has formed a relationship with his or her key person sufficient to act as a 'secure base' to allow the gradual separation from the foster carer. This process may take longer in some cases, so time needs to be allowed for it to take place without causing further distress or anxiety to the child.

- Cricklade Preschool will have regular contact with the social worker and this will be maintained through planned meetings, which will include contribution to the PEP which is reviewed annually.

- Transition to school will be handled sensitively and the designated person and or the child's key person will liaise with the school, passing on relevant information and documentation with the agreement of the child's social worker as detailed in the care plan.

Additional Support

The designated person and key person liaise with agencies and professionals involved with the child, and his or her family, and ensure appropriate information is gained and shared.