

Kent County Council

Preferred Provider Framework for Independent Fostering Provision *Placement Protocol.*

Date: 1st June 2013

Access to Resources Team

1. Introduction: -

This protocol explains the practical working arrangements of the Preferred Provider Framework for Independent Fostering Provision. It explains the background and purpose of the framework and the operational arrangements from 01st June 2013 to end May 2015.

The processes and forms within this protocol are not set in stone and will be subject to ongoing development throughout the life of the framework.

The purpose of the protocol is to outline the procedures to be followed by staff working within the Access to Resources Team (ART Team) and Social Workers / Professionals referring to the ART Team.

2. Overview of the Independent Fostering Preferred Provider Framework: -

The Preferred Provider Framework for Independent Fostering Provision is a formal agreement between Kent County Council and all preferred Independent Fostering Providers.

The Framework formalises the working arrangements between both parties to operate transparently in accordance with the pricing schedule and the service specification.

Kent Council agrees to make placements, as far as possible, with these preferred providers when the need arises. The intention is to access Independent Fostering Placements when Kent County Council is not using its own internal fostering provision.

There are a total of 34 Independent Fostering Providers on the Framework.

The Framework is structured by a three tiered system based on quality and price. Tier one providers are those who offer the highest quality but lowest costs, Tier two are less competitively priced than Tier one providers and Tier three providers are less competitively priced than Tier two providers.

The Framework groups the Independent Fostering Providers into three categories based on the different levels of care they can provide. The three categories are described as **'Standard'**, **'Complex'** and **'Specialist'** placements.

What is a Standard placement?

Children and young people who have NOT been assessed as having significant complex and specialist needs and who are NOT in need of consistent and/or intensive intervention for longer periods of time. The needs of children in standard placements may change and or fluctuate over time and may require additional support for short periods of time to stabilise the placement.

What is a Complex placement?

Children and young people, who have more acute and complex needs, may require complex placements. Their needs may be as follows: -

- Continuously abscond, present significant challenging and risk taking behaviours both to themselves and others.

- Complex educational needs and the need for tailored educational programmes.
- Significant attachment issues, significant substance misuse or impacted by the effects of parental substance misuse.
- Offending and/or sexualised behaviours.
- Self harming behaviour.
- Multiple and profound disabilities.

Many children and young people may have more than one of the needs outlined above.

What is a Specialist placement?

Children, who require more specialist provision as they have further support requirements over and above those outlined in complex placement category. Their needs may be as follows: -

- Multiple and profound disabilities with complex medical needs and high level of medical appointments.
- Young people who are in crisis and who have significantly challenging behaviour; highly sexualised behaviour; significant self harm and risk taking behaviours
- Young people in care who have profound mental health difficulties.

Other Specialist placements: -

Kent County Council may also seek to procure the specific placements for:

- Parent & Child placements
- Retained Carers for young people on Remand
- Children/young people in need of Residential Migration placements

2.1 Placement Types: -

Please note that under Standard, Complex and Specialist care categories, placements may be required to be one or more of the following: -

- **Long term or permanent placements** (as per care plan; 12 months and over)
- **Short term placements**
- **Emergency placements** (same day, out of hours and/or within 24 hours of referral)
- **Sibling placements**
- **Solo placements** (with no other children within the foster household)

2.2 Specific types of placements:

The Access to Resources Team may receive requests for specific types of placements which could be as follows:

Rehabilitation Placements: - Foster Carers who are able to work with the child and the birth family, as part of rehabilitation back to their family, in particular for young people 12+. The placements may be time limited for up to 3 to 6 months.

Bridging Placements: - a Bridging placement may be required, whilst the Social Worker is seeking a more permanent placement to be confirmed or for the adoption process to be finalised. Foster Carers, as part of a Bridging placement, will care for the child a short term basis and support the child to make the transition to their more permanent placement.

Short Break Placements and Respite: - **Short Break Placements** are for disabled young people who may require a placement over weekends and / or over the holiday period for a week or fortnight. Children in residential schools sometimes need care with a foster family at weekends and school holidays. **Respite placements** may also be required for children who do not have a disability.

Remand Placements: - for young people who are either awaiting a trial, having pleaded not guilty or a sentence. A successful placement during the remand period will help to demonstrate to the Court that the young person can change their behaviour and so reduce the likelihood of entry into the secure estate for either remand or sentencing purposes.

Parent and Child Placement: placements should last no more than 6 to 12 weeks and observation records are to be maintained and discussed with the parent every day. Detailed assessment and observation reports are to be emailed to the social worker every two weeks.

Residential Migration placements: - The Independent Fostering Agency will work with the child/ young person, who may be placed in a Residential Home, to assist their move into a Foster Carer home. Additional support may be needed for the child and the foster carers, especially if the child has very complex and specialist needs. The child's education will also need to be planned for. The aim is to ensure a smooth transition from Residential into Fostering provision.

2.3 Defining the needs of children and young people who may require Foster Care placements:

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children – (UASC): - are vulnerable children and young people who are from different cultures and religious backgrounds. Many of these children will also be experiencing 'separation' from their families, friends, community, school, as well as trauma due to what they have seen or experienced. Young people will require stable, consistent and potentially long term support and care. UASC may require standard, complex and specialist placements.

Children with Disabilities: - Children with sensory impairment, physical and learning disabilities, including children with autism may require standard placements. In some cases children will be dependent on others for all aspects of care, including moving and handling, feeding, drinking, interaction and play, stimulation, needing support in using the toilet and washing/bathing. Dependent on the complexity and range of needs children have, they may require complex placements or more specialist placements if they have profound medical needs.

Young People on Remand: - These young people may have offended and are waiting a trial, having pleaded not guilty or waiting to be sentenced. The most likely age group who will be referred is young people aged 15 – 17 years.

Core need group: are all other children and young people requiring an Independent Fostering placement. This core need group may require standard, complex and specialist placements depending on their assessed needs: -

These children/young people may **NOT**:

- be diagnosed as having a disability,
- be an asylum seeking child
- be on remand, or
- requiring a Residential Migration placement or parent and child placement.

3. Operating the Tiering process within the Framework: -

All successful providers are placed on the framework under specific care categories within Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3. Please see Appendix 1: - Procurement Services spreadsheet listing all providers by tier, category of care, placement type and price.

Tiering Structure.
<p>Tier One: -</p> <p>Tier One providers are those that offer a high quality of service and best price. The Access To Resource team will need to approach Tier One providers first and offer them first option to meet a placement requirement.</p>
<p>Tier Two: -</p> <p>Tier Two providers offer a high quality of service but are not as competitive on price as tier one providers.</p> <p>When Tier One providers can't meet the placement request offered to them, Tier Two providers are the next option. Tier Two providers will be ranked according to price and those offering the lowest price should be contacted first.</p>
<p>Tier Three: -</p> <p>Tier Three providers offer a high quality of service but are not as competitive on price as tier one or two providers.</p> <p>In the event that tier two providers cannot meet the placement request offered, the same process will be made for Tier 3.</p>

What happens in an extenuating circumstance?

The only exception to the process described above will be when an **extremely** urgent placement is needed e.g. if the social worker makes a referral at 4pm and needs a placement that evening for the child and there is **NO** in-house fostering placement available. In these circumstances, the Access to Resources Manager (or nominated deputy) should agree, via email, to waive the tiering process and the

placement request should be sent out to all providers on the Framework electronically. ART Officers will also telephone providers on the Framework.

- If **NO** suitable foster family is identified in the relevant category for Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3, the placement request should be sent out again to all Independent Fostering Providers on the framework seeking a response within a specified time frame. In this case, should more than one placement be suitable, the lowest priced and most suitable foster placement will be selected.

OR

- If **NO** suitable foster family is identified within the given timescales, the Access to Resources Manager (or nominated deputy) is to give written approval to approach Independent Fostering Agencies not on the preferred framework.

4. Placement flow chart

All Professionals referring to the Access to Resource Team and all Access to Resource staff are to complete the following process each time an Independent Fostering Placement is sought.

<p>Step 1: Receive referral request for either emergency or planned placement from Professional via telephone or e mail.</p>
<p>Step 2: Send the referring professional the referral form, which comprises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral Information • Risk Assessment • Permission to Place <p>and give timescales for submission. A placement cannot be made without authorisation.</p>
<p>Step 3: CHECK to see if the Professional has established the categorisation of the placement they seek, i.e. Standard, Complex or Specialist and placement type and whether it is a Long / Short term, Sibling Group, Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking, Remand Foster Care, Parent & Child placement.</p> <p>If NOT, the ART Officer must contact the professional to ensure this relevant information is obtained. There may be extenuating circumstances where specific information is not available or known to the Professional. In these circumstances the ART Officer needs to obtain as much information as possible from the Professional prior to sending out the placement request and flag up in the placement request that further information is still pending.</p>
<p>Step 4: - On receipt of documentation, save the forms to 'referral folder'</p>

Step 5: - The ART Officer will approach IFA's on the Framework who can meet the relevant category of need and placement type required e.g. Placement Type: Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking –Complex needs.

- The ART Officer must approach all IFA's in **Tier 1** in the first instance, in the relevant category and placement type. A response timescale should be given.
- If no IFA's are able to meet the placement request in Tier 1, **Tier 2** providers are to be approached.
- If no placement request can be met by Tier 2 providers, the ART Officer in consultation with the Professional / ART Manager will re-assesses the placement needs prior to approaching **Tier 3** providers.
- If no suitable foster families are identified in the relevant category for Tier 1, 2 and 3 all IFAs on the framework will be invited to respond. In this case the lowest priced and most suitable foster placement/s should be put forward.

Step 6: As responses from providers come back record the NO's and YES 's

When a Provider/s identifies possible matches and sends through relevant Foster Carer details, the ART Officer will select the most suitable foster placements, offering the lowest price and forward these to the Professional with the costs of placement for review to agree the final match.

The relevant Specialist Children's Services Area Director will need to be notified and their permission sought for any placement exceeding £900 per week and any additional costs to be incurred as part of the placement.

Step 7: The Professional, will be required to confirm the placement choice and placement start date to the Provider and the ART Officer.

ART officer is to carry out the following:

- Notify other providers who made offers that a placement has been identified
- Complete sections 1, 2 and 3 of Individual Placement Agreement (IPA) as well as the Pricing Schedule and send to the Provider and the Professional to complete.
- Record all carers' details
- Update the spreadsheet with the placement information.

6. Pricing

Under the Framework, all weekly unit costs for each placement have already been agreed, therefore, there is no need to negotiate the weekly unit cost of the placement.

The Core Cost Specification clearly outlines what services must be included within the weekly unit cost for each placement. *Appendix 2: Core Cost Specification.*

In the event that additional services are required over and above the core cost of the placement, ART Officers will, on occasions, be expected to negotiate the timeframe and/or additional costs where this is appropriate.

ART Officers must ensure that these additional services have been approved by the Area Director and/or at Panel prior to entering into an agreement with the Provider.

There may be occasions where ART Officers need to negotiate with the professional to identify the placement category based on the needs of the child. This may still be the subject of negotiations with the provider as part of the matching process.

7. Quality Assurance once the placement has been made

The Commissioning Team for '*Children Living Away from Home*' will be responsible for collating the outcome and quality assurance data for each Independent Fostering provider on the Framework.

The Access to Resources Team will support the Commissioning Team to carry out this function by undertaking the following tasks:

- Record, log and raise any concerns/issues about a provider or a child in placement, with the relevant commissioner, once they become known to any member of the Access to Resources Team.
- Accurately recorded the following: -
 - The total number of referrals and type of placement referral made to providers,
 - Number of referrals the provider has declined
 - Number of placements made per placement category they have tendered for.

By recording and sharing this data on a regular basis with Commissioners, they will be able to work with providers to ensure they are delivering a high standard of care, meeting their contractual obligations and recruiting / training carers to meet the needs of children being referring.

8. Placement Agreement

The Individual Placement Agreement forms the contractual agreement between Kent County Council and the Provider as to what care and support is to be delivered for the child and at what the price.

It will be the responsibility of the Access to Resources Team to send out the Individual Placement Agreement (IPA) to the provider. Once the provider has consulted with the Professional/Social Worker to complete the Agreement, the provider should send through the signed agreement.

The ART team should keep a record of returned IPA's.

Should there be a variation to the placement, then the ART team will need to complete and email out a contract variation notice. Once this is returned and signed by the provider, the variation notice needs to be attached to the original IPA and kept on file.

Appendix 3 – Individual Placement Agreement (IPA)

9. Placement Termination Notice Periods

The child's placement with the Provider should be seen in context of the child's overall care plan, and all parties should work together to enable the child to move on to the next element of the care plan in a planned way.

Unless the parties agree in writing to a shorter time frame, the notice period for either party to end a placement will as follows:

- at least 28 days for placements of over 12 weeks duration,
- at least 7 days for placements of between 7 days and 12 weeks duration
- 1 day for placements of less than 7 days duration.

The only exception to this ruling is if the expiry date of placement is known and agreed by all parties, Kent County Council will not be required to give notice of termination if there is no change to the expiry date originally agreed. However in the event that the Kent County Council or the Provider wish to terminate the placement before the agreed expiry date, seven days notice is to be given.

10. Appendices:

Appendix 1: Service Specification



Appendix 1 Service Specification.pdf

Appendix 2: Core Cost Specification



Appendix 2 Core Cost Specification.pdf

Appendix 3: Individual Placement Agreement (IPA)



Appendix 3 Individual Placement .