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REFERRAL & ADMISSION POLICY STATEMENT

All referrals and admissions to the Group’s homes must be in line with the home’s statement of purpose. The Group recognises the importance of having robust and clear enquiries, referrals and admissions procedure in order to ensure the delivery of high-quality services that are appropriate to the individual needs.

1.0 INITIAL TELEPHONE CONTACT

Initial telephone contact from a local authority’s Social Worker/Placement Officer/Resources Team will usually be made through the Referrals telephone line, or directly to a home. During the initial contact the member of staff taking the call must ensure that as much information as possible is gathered about the referral.

2.0 REFERRAL TO THE REFERRALS LINE

Upon receipt of a referral the Admissions Manager/administrator will contact the Home Manager(s) at the home(s) that may best suit the young person’s needs and will at this point pass the enquiry on to the Home Manager to follow up.

If requested, the Home Manager who takes the referral should send any relevant information about their service to the referring authority e.g. young person’s guide and Statement of Purpose and liaise with the relevant Admissions Manager/administrator. A provisional placement may be offered if the home has a vacancy and the initial information indicates that the young person falls within the scope of the home’s Statement of Purpose. Full agreement to a placement should not be confirmed until sufficient information has been received to enable a complete assessment, taking into consideration both the home’s capacity to meet the young person’s needs, and the likely impact of the young person’s admission on the established group of residents.

Placement fees should be agreed with the placing authority and confirmed in writing before admission. The Company reserves the right to terminate a placement if a placing authority fails to provide relevant and accurate information relating to a young person.

All referrals that fall within the home’s Statement of Purpose should be actively considered; if the local home manager is unsure about the suitability or otherwise of a referral, advice should be sought from the Head of Care or the Head of Service (Children’s Services).

3.0 REFERRAL DIRECT TO A HOME

As above, the local Manager should assess whether the placement is appropriate for their service and, if not, pass the details of the referral to another Home Manager who may be able to help, or to the Admissions Manager or Head of Care - SEMH for them to re-direct as appropriate.

Home Managers should include in their weekly manager's report for head office, information about all referrals received. This information is used by the Referrals and Relationships Officer to monitor the type of referrals being made, the action taken, placements made, financial data etc.

4.0 ASSESSMENT OF REFERRALS

Potential referrals should be carefully assessed by the home manager to ensure that:

1. The home is able to effectively meet the young person's needs;
2. These needs fall within the home's Statement of Purpose;
3. Effective placement planning and risk assessment can be achieved should the referral convert into a placement.

To support the assessment, documents requested from the referring authority should include:

1. The most recent statutory review report;
2. All specialists' reports e.g. psychology, CAMHS,
3. School reports;
4. Statement of Educational Need (if applicable);
5. Any relevant court reports;
6. Chronology of significant events on the young person;
7. Risk assessments.
8. Placement History.

It is important that the placing authority provides detailed and comprehensive documentation about the young person. This will enable the home to make an informed decision about the appropriateness of the referral including the capacity of the home to meet the assessed needs of the young person, and any additional resources or services that may be required to achieve this.

As part of assessing the suitability of the referral where possible the young person should be visited in their current placement, provided with the opportunity to visit the home, and have the opportunity to be part of the decision-making process about the possible move. Meeting the staff and other young people can diminish some of the anxiety they will understandably have about moving to another home and school. Where possible a young person's parents/carers should also have the opportunity to be involved in this process.

For all new admissions managers should ensure that the following forms are completed:

- **Pre-placement checklist** recording all documents received from the placing authority regarding the new admission.
- **Pre-placement information / risk assessment** of the young person (to be completed by the placing social worker). The home must ensure that any risks identified are subsequently addressed in the young person's company risk assessment, developed in the first two weeks following admission.
- **Impact assessment** must be completed by the home manager as a part of considering the appropriateness of the placement and always prior to admission. This serves to identify the potential impact on the young person of being placed in the home, together with the impact they may have on the established group and each individual within it.

- **CSE Screening tool** this should be completed by the placing social worker or local authority prior to admission.

Decisions about potential referrals should be made as promptly as possible, this is likely to be an anxious time for the child/young person concerned and, whilst it is important to follow due process, there should be no unnecessary delay.

5.0 EMERGENCY PLACEMENTS

An emergency placement is defined as the placement of a Looked After child in a foster or residential placement where the placement is made without the usual planning or assessment process having taken place because of the need to ensure the immediate safety and welfare of the child.

Whilst a planned placement is always preferable, there may be circumstances where a manager considers it appropriate to agree to the admission of an emergency placement i.e. an admission made within 24 hours of the initial referral contact. In such circumstances there is likely to be less information available about the needs and characteristics of the young person. However, the manager must make every effort to gather as much as possible, albeit in a short timescale, in order to make an informed decision that will be in the best interests of the young person concerned, and those already in the home. Where a placement is made as an emergency then consent to medical treatment must still be obtained.

Where a home will admit emergency placements in exceptional circumstances, this should be reflected in the home's Statement of Purpose.

6.0 PLACEMENT PLANNING

Once a decision has been reached to offer a child a placement the home's manager will co-ordinate the placement with the placing authority, normally the child's social worker.

Before or on the day of the placement it will be necessary to obtain the following documentation in order to inform placement planning

- Copy of the referral form and the placement risk assessment form
- Copy of the child's Care Plan and Placement Information Record. If these documents are not available, then the manager must clarify the key objectives of the care plan with the placing authority. The placing authority must be asked to provide an up-to-date copy of the care plan within 10 working days of the child's placement
- Contact arrangements (see below)
- A copy of the child's health plan or EHCP
- All medical consents
- Any other relevant documentation LAC review reports. Pathways plans, PEPs, specialist reports
- Any court orders
- Details of any forthcoming appointments
- All other relevant consent forms

7.0 CONTACT ARRANGMENTS

Arrangements for contact between the child and their family/friends should be clarified during the referral process. Maintaining contact with significant others is of considerable importance to looked after children/young people and a planned move should not be a reason for disruption to agreed plans. It is important that all parties to contact are clear about the practical arrangements and legal underpinning for all contacts, including:

- The level/frequency of contact;
- Method of contact;
- If supervised, by whom;
- If reports are required;
- The venue;
- The travel arrangements;
- Risk assessments;
- The working arrangements between the family members and/or significant others regarding the young person's progress or issues which may occur within the home or at school.

8.0 ACTIONS FOLLOWING ADMISSION

The young person's bedroom should have been prepared in advance, be clean, tidy, warm and homely, and provided with appropriate toiletries. Other children and young people should be updated about anyone about to move into the home and encouraged to be part of the welcome.

On admission or as soon as possible thereafter, the child should have an informal meeting with their key worker. Children and young people should be provided with the following information:

- A copy of the Children's Guide
- The layout of the home bathrooms toilets etc
- Fire precautions
- Daily routines
- House rules
- Arrangements for education

The young person must be given the opportunity to ask questions, meet other resident young people, and staff.

The induction checklist should be completed with the child / young person

An inventory must be made of all clothes and personal possessions brought in with the young person. The staff member responsible for the admission must ensure that the young person has secure lockable facilities for storage of valuables and / or important personal possessions. They must be offered the opportunity to pass items of financial or personal value to the home for safe keeping. A record of all such items must be maintained, signed by the staff member and the young person.

Care must be taken to ensure that young people's health care/medication needs are not disrupted by the process of moving to a new home. The young person must be registered with local primary health care providers (G.P., dentist, optician) and initial appointments made.

If not already received, consent forms e.g. for medication and medical treatment, must be obtained.

Within 7 days of the placement starting there should be a **placement planning meeting**¹ involving the home, young person, their family (where appropriate), and the placing authority.

The purpose of the placement planning meeting is:

¹ Reference: 'The care planning standard, Regulation 14 – The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015'

1. To formally reiterate the importance of the young person having a voice in the process of planning for their future;
2. To ensure no vital information has been missed in the matching and subsequent placement;
3. To clearly set out from the start the specific expectations of the placement;
4. To be precise about the level of support/interaction expected of the Social Worker and placing authority;
5. To summarise for the young person, the expectations of group living and school attainments at the home.

This process is particularly important for emergency placements, when a meeting should take place within 72 hours of the young person's admission to the home.

9.0 ONGOING PLANNING

As part of ongoing planning, placement review meetings must take place within statutory timescales, in accordance with the Care Planning Standard.

The date of the first statutory review in placement should be agreed between the placing authority and the home and school at the time of admission.

Whilst it is the responsibility of the placing authority to initiate statutory reviews, the home should be proactive in advocating on a young person's behalf where there is any delay. See also Transitions Policy and Procedure.

10.0 NOTIFICATIONS

The host authority must be notified without delay of the admission and discharge of all young people (including those who are subject of an internal transfer) who are from out of borough. The only exception to this is where the placing authority is also the host authority. The information the host authority needs can be found within the Children's Homes Regulations 2015. Depending on local arrangements, the police may also wish to be informed of all new admissions. The manager will also need to consider whether local YOS/CAMHS/health services need to be contacted.