

FOI 2641

25th September 2024

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 – INFORMATION REQUEST

Question 1: Please send me a blank version of a care-pathway-plan which is normally used for Looked after Children which will show me how plans are formatted and made to cope with reunion matters with birth family/extended family relatives (if at all and under any variances)...

Response:

Please see attached documentation as requested.

Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland

Attachment 1: LAC2 - LOOKED AFTER CHILD / 16 PLUS PATHWAY ASSESSMENT

Attachment 2: LAC3 - PROPOSED LOOKED AFTER CHILD / 16 PLUS PLAN

Attachment 3: LAC6 - CARE PLAN

Please find link to full documentation and associated guidance.

[Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland \(UNOCINI\) Guidance | Department of Health \(health-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

Could I draw your attention to page 32 of the guidance dealing with family with specific reference to contact and the need to maintain this.

Question 2: Please send me any guidance's you have on policies, practices, procedures which may also serve the planning of reunion type matters as above.

Response:

Relevant Policy

The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 (Article 29 – Promotion and Maintenance of Contact between Child and Family)

[The Children \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1995 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

The Arrangements for Placement of Children (General) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1996 (Article 6 – Arrangements for Contact)

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/1996/453/contents/made>

The Review of Children's Cases Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1996 (Article 7 – Consultation, Participation and Notification) – Taking into consideration child's right to be consulted for review purposes.

[The Review of Children's Cases Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 1996 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/1996/453/contents/made)

Children (Leaving Care) Act (Northern Ireland) 2002

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2002/11/contents>

Relevant Literature

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/life-deserved-strategy-looked-after-children-0>

Independent Advocacy and Support

[Home - VOYPIC](#)

This is the charity for children and young people with a lived experience of care in Northern Ireland. VOYPIC supports young people in and leaving care in Northern Ireland. They deliver the Independent Advocacy Service, as well as a range of programmes that bring young people together. Family time is one of the areas that young people can be supported with by VOYPIC.

Question 3: One more thing (slightly more complex): Can you confirm that it is the (LAC) Child who determines the pace of contact and whether or not reunion or increments of that occur? How might you though all aid that, given that "Care" actually causes degrees of dissociation which may easily be adaptively reactive but also prevent reunion-progress?

Response:

The Children Order places a duty on Trusts to promote and maintain contact between a child in care with those connected to the child. Contact / family time arrangements are a significant part of the child's overall care plan and it is an important issue for children and young people when they live away from their family of origin. Full consideration should always be given to contact / family time arrangements within the overall care planning process for the child.

Contact / family time arrangements must be considered as part of the preparation for any placement and must be confirmed on the Care Plan (attached) – See Attachment 3.

The type and frequency of contact / family time arrangements must be based on a full assessment of the child's needs, the overall care plan for the child and the child's current situation.

The assessment must demonstrate that consideration has been given to the following:

- Views of the child.
- Background information, which led to the child becoming a child in care.
- The child's attachments and current levels of contact / family time with family members/significant others.
- Assessed risks to the child.
- Purpose of contact / family time in relation to the overall care plan for the child
- Needs of the child for contact / family time
- Views of the parent(s).
- Views of significant others/extended family.
- Views of siblings.

Question 4: What do you all do to ensure some barriers like this are tested for the eventual good of some re-union - if at all it is indicated?

Response:

Contact / family time in rehabilitation plans is both a means of assessing the viability of return home and a process for getting the child home. Therefore, the contact / family time arrangement will need assessment and regular review at each Looked After Child / Child in Care Review to ascertain progress and to determine the care plan for the child.

A care plan for rehabilitation home to parent(s), or those with parental responsibility must demonstrate an analysis of information including the interaction during contact / family time and information gathered before and after contact / family time has taken place.

Contact / family time arrangements must be reviewed at every statutory Looked After Child/Child in Care review of the child's care plan.

The review will consider whether contact / family time remains in the child's best interests and whether any change is needed in the contact / family time arrangements.

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