



COMMISSION EAST

**Eastern Collaborative Childrens
Residential Network (ECCRN) Meeting
10.30 – 12.30**

Essex
Luton
Suffolk
Thurrock
Cambridgeshire
Bedford Borough
Central Bedfordshire
Peterborough
Hertfordshire
Southend
Norfolk



Today's agenda



10:30 – Welcome & Warm up	Steve Gentry
10:40 - Placement Request form – discussion groups	Steve Gentry/All
11:00 - Re-group – share thoughts	All
11:10 – Comfort Break	All
11:20 - Sharing placement risks – discussion groups	Helen Hoggins/All
11:40 - Re-group – share thoughts	All
11:50 – Food for Thought	Jonathan Stanley
12:05 – Topics for next meetings	All
12:15 – Agree actions and next meeting	Helen Hoggins



Ask questions throughout using SLIDO #3897924

<https://app.sli.do/event/hbaTHZrNHsma4Zihdp7wEV>



Information received on the current Placement Request Forms to make decisions is currently easy to find?



**Some Placement Request Forms
from some Local Authorities are
better than others.**



What questions do you think we need to ask in our Placement Request Forms?



**Would one Placement Request form
across all Local Authorities be
helpful?**

Whiteboard work



Placement Request Forms (PRF):

1. What currently works well and what needs improving?
2. How accurate do you find PRF forms – is the child who walks through the door the child described in the PRF? Where it is not, what's your understanding of why?
3. How useful are the social work assessments? What advice would you give to social workers writing social work assessments? Would you like to be part of a working group writing advice for social workers?
4. How can we communicate better using these forms?
5. How are you able to use the PRF in care planning?
6. How do you use the PRF to assist in making Risk Assessments?
7. Do you use a needs profile tool e.g. BERRI to structure your information gathering from the PRF for evaluating potential admission? Would it assist if one was included as part of the PRF?



2nd whiteboard session



Placement Shared Risks

1. How can the LAs demonstrate their commitment to support the Provider when placing a child?
2. How can the Provider demonstrate their commitment to support the LA when accepting a child?
3. How do we make managing and mitigating the risk easier for both LA and Provider?
4. How do Providers assess risk? Matrix? Johari Window?
5. How do you plan to support existing strengths?
6. What might be the barriers to accepting a child into your home?
7. What steps do Providers take to verify the information provided (due diligence) before accepting a child?





**What should we call the updated
'Placement Request Forms'?**

Food for Thought – Jonathan Stanley



Systematic review

- **Assessing social and emotional difficulties of children in residential care settings: a systematic review of strengths-based measures**
[Assessing social and emotional difficulties of children in residential care settings: A systematic review of strengths-based measures](#)

Article

- **Understanding unmet need: Haringey and BERRI** [Understanding unmet need: Haringey and BERRI | Nationwide Association of Fostering Providers](#) Haringey has transitioned 20 children from children's homes into fostering and reunification and, so far, there has not been a single breakdown

Measures mentioned above

- **BERRI** is a clinical evaluation tool for identifying, tracking needs [BERRI - Improving Outcomes For Children](#)
- **ACA-ACC** The [Assessment Checklist for Children](#) (ACC, 120 items) and the [Assessment Checklist for Adolescents](#) (ACA, 105 items) are mental health assessment measures for children and young people in alternate care (i.e. 'looked after children', 'out-of-home care') and for those subsequently adopted from care.
- **Boxall profile** – not only for schools (but enables shared communication using the same concepts, definitions, language and assessment) – assesses and supports social, emotional, and behavioural development [SEMH Assessment & Emotional Behavioural Toolkit for Children - Interventions, Assessments & Strategies](#)

Analysis – historical – how do things differ today?

Extracts - The use of Placement Request Forms in commissioning placements for Looked After Children

ICHA/NCERCC/CICADA August 2013

Good Practice

- Most forms sought the child's views on their future placement.
- Some forms were 'joint' placement request forms and had been devised in partnership by Health, Social Care and Education colleagues.
- There were some good examples of matching tables. These were completed by both the Social Worker and the placement provider. The needs were identified by the Social Worker in one column and the Provider responded by completing the adjacent column describing their ability to meet each of the identified needs. This allowed the Placing Officer to easily ascertain which providers met essential and / or desirable criteria.
- Some PRFs included a risk assessment; some versions enabled a provider's response to describe their contribution to managing the risk, in partnership with the Local Authority.
- The majority of Local Authorities ensured that PRFs were anonymised before sending these out to placement providers.
- Most forms were 'fit for purpose'. They had been devised solely for the purpose of finding a suitable placement and as such, their content and format focused on providing relevant information solely for the purpose of effective placement matching.
- Some commissioners had ensured that the factors that determined the essential components of a placement were helpfully listed at the start of the PRF. This allowed providers to quickly ascertain if they were able or not to consider offering a placement.
- Some forms provided clear contact details for clarification questions

Poor Practice

- A concerning number of forms included a requirement for the Social Worker to detail the child's name and address. Many also required the identifying details of family members. The PRF is the initial document that is shared in the placement sourcing process and, as it is shared with a large number of providers, the majority of which will not be delivering the service required. It is completely inappropriate and unlawful for this personal information to be shared at this initial stage. The survey undertaken confirmed that 86% of providers had received identifying information on a child, along with highly confidential and personal information. A discussion with the Information Commissioners Officer advised that the sharing of personal information at this stage is in breach of the both the Data Protection Act (the principle that information is shared on a 'need to know' basis), and the Human Rights Act (Article 8 - Right to private and family life)
- Some forms neglected to seek the child's views on their future placement
- Although many forms contained essential and helpful information, some neglected to include the actual purpose of a required placement.
- A worrying number of forms are devised to satisfy the needs of placement panels. Their content and format are set out in such a way that it enables evidence to be presented to justify the case for an independent placement. Once a funding panel has considered this information and authorised a placement search, this same form is then forwarded to placement providers. Whilst it certainly contains some helpful information on the child, these forms do not ideally serve their intended purpose. It is cumbersome for placement providers to sift through the form for relevant information and some important information is omitted.
- A number of forms were created to meet a multitude of needs. For example, one form served as a request for care proceedings, a Legal Planning meeting and accommodation and was also the form sent to placement providers. As the form is devised to serve a multitude of needs, placement providers are not the original intended audience and as such, the form may lack the relevant information to make a good placement match.
- Some forms were not laid out in a helpful way that enabled critical information to be detailed at the beginning of the form. One example being a 10 page form that asked for 'access requirements' on the final page. This meant that providers would have to read through the entire detailed request before realising that the child may require an adapted environment. If this had been made apparent on the first few pages, it would save valuable time.
- A disappointingly low number of forms contained a section for the Social Worker to enter information about a child's strengths and positive attributes.
- There were limited examples of forms that captured risk management effectively.
- Some forms did not seek the child's views on what they wanted from a future placement.
- On most forms it is not easy to see that the views of parents, connected people and other professionals could be well captured.
- Some forms did not ask for the author to be identified, which made it difficult for Providers when seeking clarification on some of the information.

Comments from providers

- Local Authorities vary greatly on the level of information received. They are sometimes selective on info - especially if it is an emergency placement.
- None are good or outstanding. Some are adequate. Most are poor.
- This depends solely on the Local Authority - some provide very standard content which is often missing vital information. We deal with the East of the country and the best we receive is from County Council, that sends out a detailed email with the referral which gives us important detail on behaviour, location, needs and placement requirements. Another also provides a good quality of information. (Council name removed) often lack important information and the referrals are missing whole sections.
- It is rarely more than superficial in nature and often tells you very little about the young person themselves.
- Often the information supplied does not give you a good pen picture of the young answers and so you get no idea about personality. Often the information supplied is just the negative side of a young person. Although it is needed to know the challenging behaviours of the young person being referred, you often get no idea why these behaviours are happening; this then often means that foster carers will not accept a placement.
- Some Local Authorities better than others.
- Some Local Authorities provide better information than others, however we now request a wide range of documents before we will accept a child, which reduces the risk of an inappropriate placement being made.
- Often comes in dribs and drabs - information, repeatedly ask and often material is out of date.
- It is mixed from Local Authority to Local Authority - some are excellent, others very poor.
- Sometimes you get the very basic information, and you information, ask for further information, make an appropriate match. Very often the Placing Officer does not have this information, and they are not always able to get hold of the Social Worker answers and obtain this.
- Some authorities are more “up to date” than others.
- Very little consistency across authorities. Depends a lot on the individual carrying out assessment.
- We find it depends A LOT on the placement or contract officer handling the process. There are some excellent ones that won't allow Social Workers to send poorly filled forms out. A good placement officer is worth their weight in gold to a Local Authority and to providers.
- Information varies greatly, sometimes this is thorough and other times information is not detailed enough.
- The quality of the information varies greatly.
- This varies from authority to authority. Often focuses on risks and recent history, with little information about the child's early years history.
- Whilst basic information is there (e.g. assault or allegation against a carer), it is often difficult to obtain further information (e.g. severity of assault) as the person in the commissioning team does not know the answers and may be unwilling to allow us to make direct contact with the relevant Social Worker, or s/he may not be available.
- As you will expect, differing Local Authorities have different approaches. Those that have gone through a tender and are working to a defined contract tend to adhere to a minimum expectation and provide better referrals for providers to consider.
- The information is inconsistent with some Local Authorities providing extensive information and others providing very minimal. Often, we are required to submit more information about our company than we receive about the young person!!
- Should be able to speak to Social Workers but sometimes limited.

Providers wanted the following information to be made available in the early part of the form:

- An ID reference, if child is previously known to them
- Age
- Gender
- Language spoken / communication needs
- Legal status
- Type of placement required
- Preferred location of placement
- Date placement required
- Reason placement required Purpose of placement
- Pen picture and chronology
- Risks posed
- Risk factors to be avoided
- Social and Emotional Needs
- Factors to consider if placed with other children
- If their current school place needs to be maintained or if the Local Authority will consider a change of school (this is a major determining factor in the early stages of matching) Information that providers felt was still essential, but which could be placed in the latter part of a placement request form:
 - Religion
 - Family composition (not names and addresses)
 - Length of intended placement
 - Young person's wishes
 - Required and measurable outcomes wanted from the placement
 - Specific information about a child's disability
 - Child's achievements and aspirations
 - Educational requirements
 - Hobbies and extracurricular activities
 - Cultural needs
 - How many previous placements and reasons for breakdowns
 - Use of alcohol, tobacco and / or drugs
 - Specific detail about behaviours that are difficult to manage and tried and tested strategies
 - Details of wider family and social functioning that may affect the young person.
 - Contact arrangements (so distances can be calculated)
 - Offending history
 - Current involvement with other agencies e.g. YOT/CAMHS.



What topics would you like to see at the next network meeting?

Agree Actions & next meeting



Working Group – Does anyone want to be involved?

Next meeting - 10 July 2025

Any Agreed Actions?