

## Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

Providers must have and implement a policy, and procedures, to safeguard children.



### Safeguarding Children: Policy for “Children in Care”

#### Policy statement

Crofton Early Learners is committed to providing quality provision based on equality of opportunity for all children and their families. All staff are committed to doing all they can to enable ‘looked after’ children in their care to achieve and reach their full potential.

A child who has been in the care of their local authority for more than 24 hours is known as a looked after child. Looked after children are also often referred to as children in care, a term which many children and young people prefer. They might be living:

- with foster parents
- at home with their parents under the supervision of social services
- in residential children's homes
- other residential settings like schools or secure units.

There are a variety of reasons why children and young people enter care.

- The child's parents might have agreed to this – for example, if they are too unwell to look after their child or if their child has a disability and needs respite care.
- The child could be an unaccompanied asylum seeker, with no responsible adult to care for them.
- Children's services may have intervened because they felt the child was at significant risk of harm. If this is the case the child is usually the subject of a court-made legal order.

A child stops being looked after when they are adopted, return home or turn 18. However local authorities in all the nations of the UK are required to support children leaving care at 18 until they are at least 21. This may involve them continuing to live with their foster family.

#### Supporting looked after children

We recognise that children in care after have often experienced traumatic situations; physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect. However, we also recognise that not all children in care have experienced abuse and that there are a range of reasons for children to be taken into 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. Most local authorities do not place children under five with foster carers who work outside the home; however, there are instances when this does occur or where the child has been placed with another family member who works. It is not appropriate for a looked after child who is under two years to be placed in a day care setting in addition to a foster placement.

At Crofton Early Learners, we place emphasis on promoting children's right to be strong, resilient and listened to. Our policy and practice guidelines for children in care are based on two important concepts: attachment and resilience. The basis of this is to promote secure attachments in children's lives, as the foundation for resilience. These aspects of well-being underpin the child's responsiveness to learning and enable the development of 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.

Providing a secure, caring environment can help looked after children overcome their early life experiences. Main priorities for change to improve the emotional and mental health of looked after children are:

- **Embed an emphasis on emotional wellbeing throughout the system.** Professionals working in the care system need the skills and knowledge to understand how they can support the emotional wellbeing of looked after children and young people.

- **Take a proactive and preventative approach.** Support for looked after children should begin with a thorough assessment of their emotional and mental health needs.
- **Give children and young people voice and influence.** Looked after children and young people need more opportunities to identify what is important to them and influence their own care.
- **Support and sustain children's relationships.** Children's carers require training and support to be sensitive, understanding and resilient.

### *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 refer to such a child using acronyms such as LAC.
- In exceptional circumstances, we offer places to funded 2½-year-old children who are in care to ensure they receive their entitlement to early education. In such cases, the child should have been with the foster carer for at least two months and show signs of having formed a secure attachment to the carer, and the placement in the setting will last a minimum of three months.
- We offer places for funded three and four-year-olds who are in care to ensure they receive their entitlement to early education. We expect that a child will have been with a foster carer for a minimum of one month and has formed a secure attachment to the carer. We expect that the placement in the setting will last a minimum of six weeks.
- 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.

### **Additional Support**

- The Designated Person for children in care is the Leader.
- Every child is allocated a key person before they start and this is no different for a child in care. The Designated Person ensures the key person has the information, support and training necessary to meet the child's needs.
- The Leader, as designated person and/or the key person liaise with agencies, professionals and practitioners involved with the child and his or her family and ensures appropriate information is gained and shared.
- Crofton Early Learners 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 setting 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 and draw up a care plan that incorporates a thorough assessment of the child's emotional and mental health needs and the child's learning needs. This plan is reviewed after two weeks, six weeks and three months. 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; and
  - how any special needs will be supported.
- In addition the care plan will also consider:
  - 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 contact the child has with his/her birth parent(s) and what arrangements will be in place for supervised contact. If this is to be at the setting, when, where and what form the contact will take will be discussed and agreed;
  - what written reporting is required;

- wherever possible, and where the plan is for the child's return home, the birth parent(s) should be involved in planning; and
  - with the social worker's agreement, and as part of the plan, the birth parent(s) should be involved in the setting's activities that include parents, such as outings, fun-days etc alongside the foster carer.
- 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.
  - In the first two weeks after settling-in, the child's well-being is the focus of observation, their sociability and their ability to manage their feelings with or without support.
  - Further observations about communication, interests and abilities will be noted to firm a picture of the whole child in relation to the Early Years Foundation Stage prime and specific areas of learning and development.
  - Concerns about the child will be noted in the child's file and discussed with the foster carer.
  - If the concerns are about the foster carer's treatment of the child, or if abuse is suspected, these are recorded in the child's file and reported to the child's social care worker according to the setting's safeguarding children procedure.
  - Regular contact should be maintained with the social worker through planned meetings that will include the foster carer.
  - Transition to school will be handled sensitively and the Leader and or the child's key person will liaise with the school, passing on relevant information and documentation with the agreement of the looked after child's birth parents.

## Legal framework

### *Primary legislation*

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|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| ▪ Children Act (1989 s47)                           | Disability Discrimination Act (1995)           |
| ▪ Protection of Children Act (1999)                 | Human Rights Act (1998)                        |
| ▪ Adoption and Children Act 2002                    | Criminal Justice and Court Services Act (2000) |
| ▪ The Children Act (Every Child Matters) (2004,s11) | Sexual Offences Act (2003)                     |
| ▪ Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006)         | Children Act (2004)                            |
| ▪ Children and Families Act 2014                    | Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations 2009  |
| ▪ The Children and Families Act 2014                | Freedom of Information Act (2000)              |
| ▪ Data Protection Act (2018)                        | Equalities Act (2006 + 2010)                   |
| ▪ Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (2015)         | Care Act (2014)                                |
| ▪ Modern Slavery Act 2015                           | Serious Crime Act 2015                         |
| ▪ General Data Protection Regulation 2018           | Children and Social Work Act 2017              |

## Legal Reference

- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2019)
- What to do if you're Worried a Child is Being Abused (HMG 2015)
- Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (DoH 2000)
- Statutory guidance on making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under section 11 of the Children Act 2004 (HMG 2007)
- Statutory Guidance on on inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (DfE 2015)
- Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2023
- Education Inspection Framework (Ofsted 2023)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023)

**Further guidance**

- Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children (Feb 2018)
- Supporting Looked After Learners - A Practical Guide for School Governors (2006)

This policy was adopted at a meeting of

CROFTON EARLY LEARNERS

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Held on

30 January 2024

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Date to be reviewed

January 2025

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