



## 01 Purpose of this Briefing

It is the responsibility of all practitioners to ensure that children cared for by the Local Authority are safeguarded, listened to and their welfare is promoted. This briefing contains local and national learning.

## 02 Impact of Language

The NSPCC highlight why practitioners should avoid the acronym 'LAC', meaning Looked After Child, when talking about children in care:

- Using the acronym 'LAC' to describe children is depersonalising.
- Labels play an important part in 'othering' children in care, positioning them as different from non-care experienced children. They can exacerbate low self-esteem and make children feel stigmatised.
- When children feel ignored and not listened to this creates a barrier to disclosure.
- Professionals need to challenge the use of such language and help children find their voice.

## 03 Trauma-Informed Practice and Professional Curiosity

Children under Local Authority care, including those residing in placements, may have experienced accumulated harm over their childhood which should lead to a trauma-informed approach. Where a child has been the subject of abuse or neglect, care plans and assessments should analyse what this might mean for future development and wellbeing.

It is important to build a strong professional relationship with the child and provide opportunities to talk about past and current experiences. At times when this fails to create stability for a child in care, professional curiosity about current harm will strengthen the understanding of day-to-day life for the child and provide a wider perspective of their lived experience. Practitioners need to consider if current experiences are contributing to presenting behaviours and be prepared to "think the unthinkable".

## 07 Resources to support practice

["Children Living Away from Home \(including Children and Families living in Temporary Accommodation and Private Fostering\)" procedure](#)

["Children and families moving across local authority boundaries" procedure](#)

Information sharing around children under Local Authority care – see [LLR Local Resources section of the procedures](#)

Building Confidence in Practice Resource Packs: Professional Curiosity for [practitioners](#) and [supervisors and managers](#)

Voice of the Child – [Was Not Heard video](#)



## 04 Multi-agency working

The Local Authority always shares Parental Responsibility with those birth parents holding Parental Responsibility where a Care Order (Section 31) is in place. Under Section 20, the Local Authority does not share Parental Responsibility, but they can make some decisions that are delegated. It is essential that, although Children's Social Care may hold Parental Responsibility and have decision making powers, decisions are made in the context of multi-agency working. When there is a disagreement, for example, about medical treatment, direct contact should be expected between Children's Social Care and the relevant Health practitioner and, where possible, exploration with a parent. The aim is a well-informed and agreed approach which balances the views of the parent, including the birth parent and corporate parent (Local Authority); the child, where age appropriate; and Health practitioner. Using existing [escalation processes](#) will aid problem solving when resolution is not easy to achieve.

## 06 Reviewing Practice

- Do you have a good understanding of the child's / family's history and the child's day-to-day life / lived experience? Is there a focus on evidence, rather than a perceived stability and absence of risk?
- Has the child been involved and kept up to date about their care planning? Have they been given the opportunity to voice their views, including to people outside of a placement? Have they been given information regarding advocacy support that they can access?
- Has there been appropriate multi-agency information sharing between agencies who share responsibility for meeting the child's needs (e.g., Local Authority, Health and Education [the School and Virtual School]), including across geographical boundaries, where required?

## 05 Multi-agency working across geographical boundaries

If a child under Local Authority care is placed outside the geographical boundaries of their home area:

- The home Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to notify agencies, including Children's Social Care and Health in the receiving/host area, of the move.
- The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) is required to be informed of a change of placement, including out of area, and a Review of Arrangements must be held.
- If a child with complex health needs and/or disabilities moves placement, there should be careful planning across agencies to ensure health needs, including equipment and medication, are met. This must be part of the change of placement planning process and, where necessary, a multi-agency planning meeting convened and arrangements confirmed in the statutory review. If there is concern that, based on gaps in provision, the child may be at risk of significant harm, there should be consideration of holding a Strategy Discussion.
- Any child protection concerns which arise are the responsibility of the Local Authority in whose area the child is found (i.e., the physical location where the child suffers, or is identified to be at risk of harm or neglect) and this Local Authority should convene a Strategy Discussion and ensure that they invite the home Local Authority to this meeting.
- If an allegation is made about a person who is working with a child, the responsibility for action lies with the [Local Authority Designated Officer \(LADO\)](#) where the alleged perpetrator holds their substantive post. The home Local Authority must be involved and kept up to date about any process.