

SOCIAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT
SOCIAL SERVICES DIVISION

Placement Guidelines
For Children's
Home

THE PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This guideline document sets out the practice protocol in matters pertaining to the placement of children in need of alternative accommodation in Homes.

The Homes in questions are the President's Village, the Ste. Elizabeth's Convent or Foyer de La Providence and the Foyer de Nazareth.

The document outlines the procedures for the removal and admission of a child to a Home. This includes the preparation of the family prior to the placement, the re-integration process and after care of the child.

The focus is on the Social Worker, who remains the case manager throughout the whole process.

THE INTRODUCTION

The Social Services have statutory responsibility to promote and safeguard the welfare of children under the Children Act.

The powers vested in the Social Services enable it to assume a coordinating role in the protection of children against all forms of abuse.

The main responsibility for the protection of children rests with the parents. Children should be brought up and cared for by their own families. However, in the event of a family breakdown where the children have to be removed from the family setting, a clear focus should remain on the welfare of the child.

In its efforts to protect children from risky situations, the Social Services have to at time remove children from their biological families and homes. The children are most of the time placed in Homes for their protection and wellbeing. The placement of children in Homes is undertaken after all other avenues have been exhausted within their families, communities and foster care.

Social Workers work with the parents with the hope to effect change prior to removal. Families are counselled on the possibility of their children being removed and are prepared for same. There is often resistant to the removal by the parents, who frequently remain uncooperative. The children are prepared as best they can and there are sometimes resistant from their side as well.

After the removal and placement, the Social Workers continue to counsel the parents for their rehabilitation.

The children and their families are also prepared for re-integration/release.

The adaptation period is planned, with regular visits to the receiving family homes, before the eventual release.

PLACEMENT AND OBJECTIVE

Before placement at a Children's Home, the Social Worker must first ensure that all means of placement with relatives and or extended family have been explored. Placement at a Home is considered as a last resort. Prior to removal, the Social Worker already has a case management plan/care plan for the family. The Social Worker then follows up and reviews the plan as appropriate.

Once the child has been placed at a Home, the following services are rendered:

- Therapy
- Counselling
- Group/individual session
- Family intervention
- Education/social/recreational activities
- Integration into family

The children are placed at a Home for their safety, to receive care and therapy and further intervention work with their family.

They are provided with a safe environment where in most cases, healing can start.

Re-integration work with the parents and or natural family is undertaken by the Social Worker. Those concerned are offered

services, e.g. parenting classes, referral to other specialists as appropriate.

REASONS & CIRCUMSTANCES FOR ADMITTANCE

The main reason for admittance is abuse by the biological parents, relatives or guardians.

The children admitted at a Home are normally aged between 6 months to 13 years but there have been cases as young as one month old. Children are admitted through a Family Tribunal Order.

The children`s parents normally have alcohol and psychological problems, spousal conflicts, housing and violence related problems.

PROCEDURE FOR REMOVAL OF A CHILD

The Social Services receive referrals from agencies for cases of abuse.

The Social Services carry out investigation by:

- Interviewing the parties' concerned.
- Home visits.
- Gathering of information.
- Engagement of family and children in assessment process.
- Evaluating information.
- Impact on children.
- Liaising with other agencies.
- Assessment with other professionals.
- Decision and preparation of action plan.

The Social Services work with the family to effect change. If the child still remains at risk of harm despite intervention, the intention of future action is discussed with the family.

The Social Services prioritise needs and give a determination, including registration on the At Risk Register.

The family is prepared for the removal and plans are discussed with them.

Negotiation is undertaken with the identified Home for placement.

The Social Services seek a removal Order from the Family Tribunal. Removal of the child is decided upon as a very last resort.

Placement will be reviewed as determined by the Family Tribunal and or the Social Services.

The Social Services implement the care plan and follow up the case. All issues are addressed in the care plan, e.g. access.

The Social Worker undertakes work with the biological family, or as the case may be, with a view to re-integrate the child in the family.

ADMISSION TO A CHILDREN'S HOME

Following investigation and Family Tribunal Order to remove a child from his biological family, the Social Worker again prepares the child/family for removal. Removal of the child is decided upon as a very last resort.

A Consultative Meeting is held with the Manager of the identified Home to discuss the matter.

The Social Worker ensures that an Admission Form is filled with the relevant information.

The child is accompanied by the Social Worker to the respective Home, following preparation.

The Social Worker meets with the Manager of the Home and introduces the child.

The Social Worker provides the Manager of the Home with the Admission Form and the Family Tribunal Order immediately upon placement, along with other relevant documents.

The Social Worker undertakes work with the biological family, or as the case may be, with a view to re-integrate the child in the family.

The care plan is monitored with a view to work for the discharge of the child.

The Social Worker then monitors the case and provides regular follow up reports.

The Family Tribunal Order is reviewed as per the instructions.

RE-INTEGRATION PROGRAMME

Once a child has been placed at a Home, the Social Worker continues to work and or support the child as the need may be and the family to effect change.

The re-integration process begins the day the child is placed and is a continuous process.

Other placement for the child with extended families is also sought in order to re-integrate the child in a normal family setting.

The aim is for the child's stay at the Home to be as short as possible.

The time frame for re-integration would depend on the circumstances of the child's situation. Note that each case is different.

The re-integration plan includes the adaptation period once a receiving family has been identified. The child will start the adaptation period by visiting the receiving family during the weekends or for day visits.

REFERRALS TO PSYCHOLOGIST

The above are undertaken by the Social Worker, as the focal person. The Manager of the Home may discuss issues relating to the child with the Social Worker who will then evaluate and make the referral.

The Social Worker would know whether the child has already been referred or not and if the referral is ethically appropriate.

Hence any requests for psychological intervention should be channelled through the Social Worker, who draws up the care plan, addressing same in an ecological manner.

ACCESS/VISITATION BY PARENTS

The above is organised by the Social Worker in consultation with the Manager of the Home.

It is crucial that the Social Worker organises access or visitation as there are issues to be taken into consideration, e.g. supervised access.

A copy of the Family Tribunal Order is submitted along with the Admission Form when a child is placed.

CONCLUSION

Agencies involved in child protection must work together for the welfare of the child.

Knowing our roles and boundaries will remove confusion and enable all concerned to work closer together for the best interest of the child.

This guideline will assist towards promoting better work relationship in relation to the placement and after care of abused children.