



Looked After children Policy

At Allsorts Childcare, we are dedicated to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for all children and families.

Definition and Legal Framework

The term "looked after" is generally used to describe a child who is under the care of the local authority. This includes children who are subject to a care order or those who are temporarily classified as looked after for planned short breaks or respite care. Most looked-after children are typically cared for by foster carers, while a smaller number may reside in children's homes, be cared for by family members, or be placed back in their family home.

The term "looked after child" refers to a child's current legal status. At our nursery, we never use this term to single out a child or refer to them using acronyms such as LAC. Instead, we acknowledge that many children and young people prefer the term "children in care."

The legal framework for this policy is underpinned by or supported through:

- Childcare Act (2006)
- Children Act (1989 and 2004)
- Adoption and Children Act (2002)
- Children and Young Persons Act (2008)
- Children and Families Act (2014)
- Children and Social Work Act (2017).

Our policy

At Allsorts, we treat each child as an individual. We recognise that for young children to fully benefit from educational opportunities, they need to feel settled with their carer. Before a child starts nursery, we will discuss with their carer and, if applicable, their social worker, the length of time the child has been with the carer. This conversation helps us determine how secure the child feels and whether they are ready to handle further separation, a new environment, and new expectations.

We understand that there are many reasons a child may enter care, some of which may involve traumatic experiences or abuse. All our practitioners are dedicated to ensuring that every child can achieve their full potential. Our staff are trained in our safeguarding policies and procedures, and we plan additional training to meet the individual needs of children when necessary. Practitioners receive ongoing support from management, and we maintain an open-door policy for discussing any sensitive issues related to the child.

When needed, we contribute to assessments concerning the child, such as those conducted under local authorities' assessment frameworks or Early Help Assessments (EHA). We also participate in multi-agency meetings, case conferences, or strategy meetings related to the child's learning and development. The designated person for looked-after children and/or the child's key person will attend meetings as appropriate.

The designated person for 'looked after children' is Donna Hounsell and the managers of each setting are the deputies.

Each child is assigned a key person who will provide support during the transition and settling-in process. This key person will continue to build a relationship with the child, their carers, and any relevant agencies involved. Regular communication will be maintained with the carers throughout the child's time at the nursery, as well as with the social worker, virtual school head, or other professionals when applicable.

The key person will conduct ongoing observations to better understand the child's interests and will plan activities that align with their stage of learning, development, and personal interests. This information will be shared with carers and other professionals as appropriate, along with any concerns regarding the child's developmental progress.

If necessary, the designated person will create a care plan in collaboration with the child's carers and any relevant professionals. This plan will include:

- 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
- Where applicable, how any special educational needs and/or disabilities will be supported.

In addition, the care plan may also consider:

Communication and Information Sharing Guidelines:

1. Information Sharing with Carers and Local Authorities: Details on how information will be shared with the carer and the local authority (acting as the 'corporate parent') will be established. This will include the information shared with other organisations or professionals, as well as how it will be recorded and stored.
2. Contact with Birth Parents: The arrangements for the child's contact with their birth parents will be outlined. This includes discussions on supervised contact: when, where, and in what form it will take place, if it is to occur within the setting.
3. Authorised Pick-Up and Information Recipients: A list of individuals authorised to collect the child from the setting will be provided, along with those permitted to receive information about the child.
4. Written Reporting Requirements: The requirements for written reports will be specified.
5. Involvement of Birth Parents: Whenever possible, especially if there is a plan for the child to return home, birth parents should be involved in the planning process.
6. Participation in Activities: With the social worker's agreement, we will determine whether the birth parents can participate in the setting's activities that include parents, such as stay and play days, fundraising events and our Yearly events, alongside the foster carer.
7. Personal Education Plan (PEP): Where applicable, a Personal Education Plan (PEP) will be created for children aged two to five in collaboration with the social worker and/or care manager and carers. We will also attend all relevant meetings and contribute to reviews.
8. Transition Support: The key person and the designated 'looked after children' lead, Donna, or the manager of the setting, will work together to ensure that transitions to school or another nursery are handled sensitively and smoothly. All necessary information, including the child's individual file containing observations, photographs, and artwork, will be shared with the carer at this stage.

Private Fostering

Private fostering is an arrangement made between the parent and the private foster carer, who then becomes responsible for caring for the child in such a way as to safeguard and promote their welfare.

A privately fostered child is a child under the age of 16 (18 if a disabled child) who is cared for and provided with accommodation etc. for more than 28 days and where the care is intended to continue by someone other than:

- The parents
- A person who is not a parent but has parental responsibility
- A close relative
- The local authority.

It is a statutory duty for us to inform the local authority when we are made aware of a child who may be subject to private fostering arrangements. We will do this by contacting the local authority's children's social care team