

**CHILDRENS HOMES OPERATIONAL  
MATCHING PANEL (CHOMP)**

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### **Scope**

Effective matching is important for children's future life chances because it can make a real difference to their well-being, relationships and education. Give a child the right family environment and they are much more likely to thrive. (Ofsted 2016). Getting a match right ensures stability for children and makes good sense, preventing a breakdown.

Each child has a unique set of circumstances, so there is no one-size-fits-all approach to caring for them. Some of these children will struggle to communicate easily with others, understand their own feelings or needs, or manage relationships and situations well.

Research tells us the best children's homes:

- Recognise why children are doing what they are doing;
- Respond with empathy;
- Support children to regulate their own behaviour, so physical interventions are rare.

Ofsted says by having effective matching processes for referrals and planned moves into the home is vital. Homes that do this well make sure that:

- Placements are suited from the start and have the best chance of succeeding. This secures the ongoing stability of the home for the other children living there;
- Staff use clear and simple risk assessments and regularly review care and behaviour management plans. This means that they know their children really well and understand their particular needs.

Doncaster Children's Service's draws upon this research, the Care Planning Regulations 2013, the Children's Homes Regulations 2015 and Quality Standards to form the basis of the Children's Homes Operational Matching Panel (CHOMP). These standards and guidance assist the CHOMP to ensure each child is accommodated in line with the Statement of Purpose of the home to ensure every child can be protected. Each child will be able to enjoy and achieve, health and educational needs will be met, and they will be able to form positive relationships with staff.

Fundamental to this is matching process are the child's wishes and feelings and they should be sought prior to any decision being made about placement. The views of all children already accommodated will be considered as part of the process.

## Process

Through the Child in Care (CIC) Strategic Group and Senior Business Meetings any vacancy within one of Doncaster Children's Service homes will be shared with Strategic Leads in Children's Social care.

The Children in Care or Help and Protection Service Team would identify a child that requires a residential placement. The Statement of Purpose for children's homes in Doncaster requires that the admission of children take place in a planned way.

Referrals for placements in children's homes

Referrals from teams where a child has recently been or has a plan to be placed in care, situations where a child is residing out of area or with an external provider, and there is a plan to return to home to Doncaster.

Discussions regarding children who should be considered for vacancies should be shared within the Placement Meeting.

In all circumstances, it is necessary for the social worker or their Team Manager to discuss potential vacancies in our children's homes with the Residential Service Managers. Having ascertained that there is a vacancy a CHOMP will need to be convened. If there is no vacancy, then a discussion needs to take place with the referrer's Strategic Lead regarding alternative plans. If a vacancy is available, the Residential Service Managers will chair the CHOMP. The CHOMP will be arranged by the Registered Manager of the home which has a vacancy.

Panel members of the CHOMP will include:

- The homes' Registered Manager;
- Social Worker or Team Manager of children already in placement;
- Social Worker or Team Manager of the child referred;
- It may be necessary for an advocate for the child to attend in some circumstances;
- TCI Practice Development Lead.

Within the CHOMP meeting, information will be shared taking into account the children already living at the home, including their needs, matching considerations and views. The social worker/ team manager for the child being referred will also provide information about their child, including their needs, matching considerations and views. The chair will record the discussion and outcomes within the CHOMP meeting template.

Where there is more than one child being considered for a vacancy, only one CHOMP discussion/meeting will need to be held. However, in some situations, particularly where timeframes are tight, more than one meeting may be required. In situations where the children could be matched discussions will take place with the referrer's Strategic Lead responsible for the child and Strategic Lead Looked after Children and Achieving Permanence regarding priority of need. Where children are not matched a clear rationale will be given to the referrer in writing so they can discuss this with their Strategic Lead to make alternative plans.

Where a child has been matched and a decision is made to place a pre placement planning meeting will take place in line with Doncaster Children's Social Care policy and procedure.

### **Summary**

It is in the best interests of the child referred and of those children already in placement that this process is followed in full. All staff involved in the process are accountable and must ensure that every child is represented. Social workers, Heads of Service and children's representatives must prioritise the process so that children can be matched promptly and appropriately.

## CHILDRENS HOMES OPERATIONAL MATCHING PANEL (CHOMP) FLOWCHART

