

Breakaway keyworker guidance (BREAKAWAY)

CHILDREN'S HOME REGULATIONS including QUALITY STANDARDS 2015

Regulation 5 – Engaging with the Wider System to Ensure Each Child's Needs are Met

Regulation 7 - The Children's Views, Wishes and Feelings Standard

SCOPE OF THIS CHAPTER

The term Key Worker is used to describe the person who has key responsibility for a child in the home. This guidance summarises the key responsibilities for that person.

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1. Management of Key Workers

The home's manager is responsible for ensuring that each child is assigned a Key Worker, who will facilitate the development of positive and constructive relationships between the child and adults. Ideally, the Key Worker should be appointed prior to admission to support pre-admission visits, or at the very least, upon admission to ensure a smooth introduction to the home.

The manager must ensure that all Key Workers are appropriately trained and fully competent to perform their duties. Additionally, each Key Worker's Personal Development Plan (PDP) should be regularly reviewed to ensure ongoing professional growth and effectiveness.

Ideally, the Key Worker should remain consistent throughout the child's time at the home; however, the home's manager may decide that the Key Worker for a child should change if:

- a. The child complains that the relationship is not working;
- b. The member of staff leaves the employment of the home or is likely to be on a long term absence;
- c. The member of staff is unable to establish a positive relationship;
- d. The manager believes that the relationship is not in the best interests of the child or the member of staff.

The home's manager will ensure that Key Workers are regularly supervised, appraised and offered support and guidance as needed.

2. The Role of the Key Worker - General

The role of Key Workers has evolved over time, originally established in large boarding schools and residential settings to ensure quieter children were not overlooked. While some children easily

communicate their needs, others may be overshadowed by louder personalities. The Key Worker advocates for these children, ensuring their needs are met and that they are not lost in the crowd.

Key Workers take on the responsibility of being the “Corporate Parent” for their assigned child. They help the child navigate challenges, celebrate achievements, and ensure their voice is heard. While the relationship can sometimes be challenging, it is crucial for the child’s wellbeing and development.

Every child needs someone they can trust and turn to, and Key Workers provide that support. All staff members, regardless of their role, have a duty to ensure the safety and wellbeing of every child in the home.

What Do Keyworkers Do?

All aspects of your child’s life are guided in the home under your direction. This direction is agreed with all STAKEHOLDERS in your child's life.

Stakeholders could be...

Parents, Carers, Social workers, Family members, Teachers and tutors, CAMHS workers, psychologists, Doctors or anybody else who is legitimately related to your child.

Being there for the child

Being there each morning (or making sure someone is doing it for you); Ensure the child's bedroom is tidy, they have clean clothes, and are fully prepared for the day, including having washed, brushed their hair, and being ready for any activities ahead. Engage with the child to confirm they understand the day’s plans. If there are meetings, appointments, or court appearances scheduled, discuss these with the child, including any potential issues. Raise any risks or concerns with your Line Manager or supervisor.

Being there during the day Take a proactive interest in the child's health needs, including attending appointments with the dentist, doctor, and optician. Ensure the child has sufficient clothing that is bought, cleaned, and properly cared for. The child should be clean, presentable, and have a tidy, personalised bedroom that is in good repair and well-equipped. Provide adequate storage for personal belongings and clothes to keep them safe.

Safety is crucial, as children in residential care may feel vulnerable or scared. Some may experience bullying or abuse. Your role is to "Be There" for them. Familiarise yourself with your key child’s file, background, and family details. Understand their interests, hobbies, and emotions, and encourage them to engage in activities or join clubs. Identify what makes them happy, sad, or anxious, and offer support, advice, and guidance to ease their concerns.

Being there at night:

Bedtime can be a difficult time for children, as it often brings up reflections and anxieties about the day, past events, or upcoming plans. Take time to support the child in identifying and processing their emotions. Offer reassurance and talk with them in a positive and supportive manner to help ease their fears or worries. Alert colleagues to the child's feelings, noting how this may impact their behavior, and share strategies for managing potential issues.

When settling the child for bed, ensure practical matters are attended to, such as providing clean clothes for the next day, toiletries, and a clean towel. Confirm the child understands the plans for the following day and any short-term arrangements that have been made.

Being there day-to-day:

As a Key Worker, ensure the child’s special occasions, like birthdays and anniversaries, are celebrated and help them maintain positive relationships with family and friends. Keep all staff

informed about important updates and advocate for the child's needs. Communicate any changes in their life and, if off duty, inform the manager or colleagues for continuity of care.

You are responsible for ensuring plans and strategies are communicated with staff, and feedback from professional meetings is recorded in the child's file. Oversee routine health checks and support the child's preferences in reviews.

Building a trusting relationship through regular meetings is key. Help the child understand their needs versus wants and support their development. Work closely with parents and the school to align educational and welfare efforts, ensuring goals are consistent.

The Key Worker coordinates multi-agency services, monitors care strategies, and ensures all records are properly maintained. During the child's early placement, help them settle in and ensure they understand house rules, as well as ask for their views on the placement.

Finally, support the child in maintaining social, recreational, and cultural links inside and outside the home.

3. Key Worker Guidance

3.1 Keyworkers and Planning.

Key working involves planning for each child's needs in various areas. For instance, discuss with your child how they prefer to be woken in the morning and create a plan to minimize conflict, ensuring consistency among staff. Before upcoming reviews, assess if any changes are needed in their current plan, helping the child express their thoughts and gathering supporting evidence. If the child's behaviour leads to frequent holds by staff, discuss the causes and collaborate with the PBSuk worker (if allocated) to adjust the behaviour management plan, sharing updates with parents and social workers. The Key Worker is responsible for ensuring any changes are reflected in the child's care plan, discussing life changes with the child and family to adjust plans as needed.

3.2 Keyworkers, Incentives and Targets

Children's behaviour often reflects underlying issues and can serve as a form of communication. A Key Worker helps identify and address problem areas by working with the child to find alternative solutions. Setting realistic and focused targets is key, as too many can overwhelm the child. Incentives should be appropriate to the child's development and needs, ensuring they are achievable. Collaborating with teachers to align care and education goals promotes consistency. Keeping parents informed about strategies and incentives helps maintain consistency across home and care settings.

3.3 Keyworkers and Communication.

Keyworkers are central to the life of a child at Breakaway. This means that your communication is crucial with parents, carers, school teacher, SW, GP, etc - And not forgetting...**the Child...**

For example, If you are arranging a child's birthday treat who do you need to speak with?

1. Young person, who do they want to go on the treat?

2. The designated Team Leader, how will the treat or trip be staffed?
3. The shift leader of the shift that the treat will happen on, to ensure staffing and transport arrangements are sorted and people are aware.

This example, I hope demonstrates the need for planning and communication if all is to go successfully.

All aspects of a child's life at Breakaway's require the same level of planning and communication.

3.4 How do Keyworkers do all this?

Talk to people... especially your child.

Make sure your shift leader gives you the time to do your keywork chores.

If in doubt....ASK

Make sure your keywork sessions are fun for your child. That way they will want to spend time with you and your relationship will flourish. This can be hard, as it is often the case that keyworkers are the deliverers of the more negative messages. Try to approach this in a way that demonstrates that your trying to help resolve problems and not just nagging.

Get other people views on your child, it's not just about you and them, it's about them and everybody...

As a key worker, it is your responsibility to ensure the following are completed:

The key worker is expected to take a lead role to share information to other members of the team

1. At least one key work session MUST be completed with the young person each month and must be written up and signed off by the key worker and young person (where possible).
2. Regular contact with the child's school to get an oversight of progress or issues in school/college/work.
3. Weekly telephone call to Parents/Carers – Summary of their week, including positives and any issues that occurred during the week.
4. Individual targets set for the young person to be agreed on by the key worker and young person.
5. Review and update TIM, Risk Assessments, PSP regularly and after major incident/s.

3.5 Complaints

The Key Worker must ensure the child understands how the Complaints Procedures work, that s/he has a copy of the complaints procedure and is confident enough to use the procedures if necessary. Also it is the Key Worker's responsibility to ensure the child has an up to date copy of the Children's Guide and other information produced by the home for children; ensure the child is fully conversant with the Fire Precautions and is aware of fire exits.

4. Planning and Recording a Key Worker Session

Key working sessions provide you with a chance to observe the child, assess their progress, develop your relationship and identify and resolve problems etc.

You must arrange a Key Worker session with your key child as soon as possible after s/he is placed and then monthly thereafter.

The overall purpose of Key Worker sessions is to discuss progress, problems and achievements.

There are various ways to do this, either formally in a meeting or informally whilst undertaking an activity.

PLANNING THE KEY WORKING SESSIONS AHEAD: It is not exhaustive, but this is a list of things you should do in planning a Key Worker session:

- Plan Ahead: Schedule a suitable time for the session, and discuss it with the child in advance.
- Comfort: Ensure the child feels comfortable, choosing between a formal meeting or informal activity-based session.
- Prepare: Organize any necessary materials (e.g., petty cash) and inform the child of the date, time, and location.
- Child's Input: Ask the child to think about issues they'd like to discuss. For non-verbal children, observe and record their reactions.
- Purpose: Identify the session's focus—whether addressing behaviors, planning for reviews, or discussing past or future events.
- Collaboration: Work with your manager to identify key discussion points and approaches.
- First Session: After placement, ensure the child understands the reasons for their placement, the placement plan, and essential safety information.
- Set Boundaries: Establish rules for the sessions, including frequency, confidentiality, and meeting style (formal or activity-based).
- Addressing Issues: Present negative behaviors carefully, focusing on encouraging the child's acceptance and willingness to change.
- Relationship Building: Change takes time, so avoid overwhelming the child; build slowly and focus on positive progress.
- Handling Rejection: If the child avoids or rejects you, remain patient and seek support from your manager if needed.
- Safety Concerns: Always talk to your manager if you have concerns about the child's well-being.

Any team member can have a key work type (1:1 session) discussion with a child.

Don't forget to record it and place a copy in the child's electronic file and upload on ICS regularly.

There is a monitoring sheet for monthly key working/1:1 sessions for all children.