

North West Procedure: Safeguarding children and young people placed across local authority boundaries

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North West Procedure: Safeguarding children and young people placed across local authority boundaries

Introduction

1. This procedure is intended to provide clear guidance for local authorities placing looked after children and young people (CYP) within another local authority area.
2. The procedure should be used alongside North West Consultation for placements at a distance guidance and template (appended and editable version available on [NWADCS website](#)).

Purpose

3. The purpose of this procedure to provide:
 - i. Guidance for local authorities placing looked after children and young people in an out-of-area or 'at a distance' placement,
 - ii. Guidance in respect of safeguarding statutory duties, processes, and implications for both 'home' and 'host' local authorities,
 - iii. An escalation policy to support local authority resolution when concerns arise relating to cross-boundary working.

Relevant legislation and guidance

4. The procedure is based on the following regulations and statutory guidance:
 - i. [The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review \(England\) Regulations 2010](#),
 - ii. [The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations Volume 2: care planning, placement, and case review](#) (See page 53 onwards),

When do these regulations apply?

5. These regulations apply to any placement of a child or young person in care who is placed in residential or foster care outside of their local authority. The regulations do not apply for connected person carers, foster carers who are registered with the home local authority but live outside the local authority area, or placement with parent cases.

What is meant by an 'out of area' placement?

6. These will be placements in local authorities which have a geographical boundary with the home local authority – e.g., for Halton, that is St Helens, Knowsley, Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester and Liverpool.

What is meant by an 'at a distance' placement?

7. This is any placement not within the local authority's boundaries nor within any of the bordering local authorities. Distance such as 20 miles from the local authority no longer apply and should not be used.

Pre-placement procedure referral and due diligence

8. Children's social care must complete the referral form for the commissioning team to instigate a placement search. The referral form includes the following:
 - a. Local authority information,
 - b. Child or young person's basic details,
 - c. Child or young person's care and support needs.

9. Following an offer from a provider, the commissioning team will consult with children's social care. If the offer is deemed to meet the need, the commissioning team completes due diligence, which includes:
 - a. Ofsted judgement and inspection or report,
 - b. Reports produced under Regulation 44, [Children's Homes \(England\) Regulations 2015](#)
 - c. Information Sharing Protocol notification relating to the provider,
 - d. Other relevant documentation including Statement of Purpose, risk assessment and matching form.

10. Additional checks may be considered if there is a perceived risk, including a visit to a new home. The commissioning team will form a view of the provider and send this to children's social care.

Consultation for placements at a distance

11. Regulations require the placing local authority to consult with the host local authority when they are considering making a distant placement. This is to be done in good time to enable a thorough assessment of the appropriateness of the local area's ability to meet the child and young person's needs.

12. At the point a placement offer is made from a provider, a consultation for placements at a distance should take place between the home and host local authorities, including:
 - a. Basic information about the CYP,
 - b. The needs of the CYP which would need to be met by local area services,
 - c. The response from the host authority on the ability of local services to meet the stated needs, including their local offer (*see below*).

13. Following a consultation for placements at a distance, a formal offer may be made including a weekly fee and their view on the provider's ability to meet the needs of the child/young person.

14. The Placements North West team has devised a good practice regional template for [consultation for placements at a distance consultation](#). An editable version is available on the [NWADCS website](#).

Local Offer

15. The host authority should also provide information about their local area as part of the consultation for placements at a distance process.

16. All local authorities should have available their 'Local Offer' for children who are placed in their area. This should include the contact details and arrangements for universal, targeted, and specialist services available alongside key contacts in the local authority to contact when making a placement in their area. All local authorities should have this local offer in place since 1 April 2015. The [North West Template: Consultation for placements at a distance](#) (appended with an editable version on [NWADCS website](#)) provides an opportunity for this information to be shared.

17. The Association of Directors of Children's Services has produced guidance which is detailed below. These are only suggestions based on what has been shared with ADCS by local authorities already. Each area will have different service structures, names, and access arrangements; where necessary these should be explained to those working with looked after children placed in your area, or the young person themselves.

18. Suggested service areas to be covered in 'local offer for looked after children' include:
Easy to access webpage containing descriptions and contact details for each of the following:

- How to contact someone in your area to discuss potential placement from outside (as per duty to 'consult' where the placement is 'at a distance'),
- How to contact your area to make a notification of new, changing, or ending placement,
- General information about the area – population size and types; rurality; geography,
- Education service – admissions, Virtual School details,
- Early Years and childcare,
- Family support and information and children's centres,
- SEN and Disability services and stage of transition under new reforms,
- Children in Care Councils and advocacy services,
- Health services – Designated Doctor and Nurse; arrangements for health reviews; mental health services; sexual health services; drug and alcohol services,
- Youth Justice / Youth Offending Team contacts
- Youth Services / Connexions etc

- MASH arrangements and/or Missing from Home / Trafficking / Exploitation services, strategies, and operational arrangements for sharing information about risk and experiences.
19. In cases of emergencies, the consultation process should be completed within 5 working days. This process and the information provided can support care planning and permanence responses within children's social care.

Authorisation

20. The Director of Children's Services should formally nominate a nominated officer to approve all 'out of area' placements. In most cases, this will be the Assistant Director or equivalent.
21. The Director of Children's Services must directly authorise all 'at a distance' placements and cannot delegate this authorisation to the nominated officer.
22. Local authorities placing out of area and at a significant distance, such as over 50 miles, may wish to consider these placements similarly to formal 'at a distance' placements and seek authorisation by the DCS.
23. The following information should be provided as part of the authorisation process:
- a. The children's home/fostering agency latest Ofsted Inspection report,
 - b. The Statement of Purpose,
 - c. The children's home location risk assessment – this should cover risks that are known or possible because of the location and should be informed by consultation with the police and the local authority,
 - d. A view from the host local authority – this is not specified in the regulations but would suggest this is both from the safeguarding team and the commissioners,
 - e. Why this placement is required and the outcomes it seeks to achieve,
 - f. How education, contact and health needs will be met,
 - g. The view of the child/young person, parent/carer and Independent Reviewing Officer.
24. The nominated officer/DCS must satisfy themselves that this is the most appropriate placement and authorise before any placement is made. In emergencies, approval must still be sought in advance of any placement being made and full information in line with regulations must be provided within 48 hours.
25. Once the placement offer has been authorised, the commissioning team are informed, and an Individual Placement Agreement is completed by children's social care.

Notification Process

26. Regulation requires that the **home/placing local authority must give written notification to the host local authority of their intention of placing a child or young person in their area.** If the placement is made in an emergency, this must be completed within five working days of the start of the placement, unless it is not reasonably practicable to do so. It also requires children's homes to notify their host local authority when a child is placed with them by another authority (See points 26 and 29).
27. Where a child is not in care but is placed in a health or education placement for three months or more (or with that intention), the placing authority/ organisation has a duty to notify the host local authority before placement or as soon as practicable thereafter.
28. The Association of Directors of Children's Services will support this requirement through maintenance of a [list of secure email accounts](#) linked to each Director of Children's Services/ secure generic email inbox which can be used to make notifications.
29. The host authority upon receipt of the notification must inform the education service and the relevant health trust for the area in which the looked after child is placed must also be notified, consideration must be given to the local police service where appropriate. The manager of a children's home must notify, without delay, the local authority for the area in which the children's home is located (if different from the placing authority) of the admission to/discharge from the home of any child. The local authority may wish to devise a register for looked after children and young people in their area (*see below for guidance*).
30. During the notification process, there is an opportunity for a children's social care Team Manager to Team Manager conversation. The Team Manager who has responsibility for the looked after CYP, should consider contacting the appropriate team manager in the host local authority, who holds responsibility for the notification process and is likely to exercise statutory duties. This discussion should consider the following:
- i. Respective safeguarding duties and responsibilities (*see joint responsibilities guidance below*),
 - ii. Consider sharing information that supports the host local authority and services to meet the child or young person's needs,
 - iii. Confirm that Ofsted has been informed of an unregulated placement by the placing/home authority.

Notification Form

31. The following information items are suggestions to be shared at notification of new or ceased placement:

- Child's full name and AKA,
- Date of Birth,
- Gender,
- Placing authority,
- Social Worker name and contact details (particularly phone, email),
- Emergency details for home authority,
- IRO details,
- Legal status (i.e., sec 20/full care order),
- Whether this is a notification of a new placement, a change, or end of placement,
- Date placement started or date due to change or end,
- Carer / institution type (foster carer, children's home or other),
- What the carer has been contracted to provide, if specialist,
- Carer contact details including address,
- Particular needs or risks to the child such as SEN, disability, youth offending, mental health needs etc – copy of the care plan should be shared to highlight needs,
- Whether the child has an Education, Health and Care Plan and, if so, details of the local authority which maintains the plan,
- School name and address (old and planned new school if known),
- GP details (old and/or new if known),
- Child NHS Number.

32. The above are suggestions based on existing template forms and the guidance. This information could be provided in the body of an email or on a form attached to an email. It could also be collected via a secure online form on the host LA website.

Register for Looked After Children

The local authority where the child is placed must maintain a register of looked after children for whom it is responsible and all looked after children placed in its area, including those children who are the responsibility of another local authority.

33. This register should include:

- i. Children or young people looked after by the authority,
- ii. Children or young people looked after by another local authority but placed within the authority, where there has been agreement that the authority will carry out some of the responsibilities of the placing local authority,
- iii. Children or young people looked after by another local authority but placed within the authority, where the placing local authority continues to carry out all the functions in relation to the child.

34. The register should include the following information in relation to each child:
- a. The name, gender, and date of birth of the child,
 - b. The name and address of the person with whom the child is placed and, if different, the name and address of the child's parents and all those with parental responsibility, including legal status i.e. section 20/full care order,
 - c. The name of the placing authority,
 - d. Whether the child is disabled and/or has an EHCP or SEN needs,
 - e. Where arrangements have been made by the host local children's social care services to undertake the duties of the placing local authority; what those arrangements are and the name of the person within the placing authority with whom they were agreed,
 - f. The date on which the placement was made and the date when it terminated including the reason for the termination.

Joint local authority safeguarding responsibilities plan

35. The local authority's children's social care have a statutory duty to carry out section 47 enquiries in any of the following circumstances:
- i. There is information to indicate that a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm,
 - ii. A child is subject to an Emergency Protection Order,
 - iii. A child is subject to Police Protection.
36. The responsibility for undertaking section 47 enquiries lies with the local authority for the area in which the child lives or is found, even though the child is ordinarily resident¹ in another local authority's area.
37. Where a Section 47 Enquiry is to be conducted in relation to a child who is ordinarily resident in the area of another local authority, the child or young person's home authority should be informed as soon as possible and be involved as appropriate in the strategy discussion. In certain cases, it may be agreed that the home authority should undertake the Section 47 Enquiry (for example where the child is looked after) and in all cases, the home authority should take responsibility for any further support of the child or family identified as necessary.

¹ There is no definition of 'ordinary residence', so the term should be given its ordinary meaning, i.e. where the person lives. Statutory guidance to the [Care Act 2014](#) on the meaning of 'ordinary residence' states that authorities should consider each case on its merits, and that the concept involves questions of both fact and degree – factors such as time, intention and continuity must be taken into account. There is no minimum period in which a person must be living in a particular place for them to be considered ordinarily resident. Ordinary residence can be acquired as soon as a person moves into an area.

38. The host local authority must share any information relating to safeguarding they may receive with the home/placing authority, for example missing notifications received from local police.
39. Where the placing local authority requests that the host authority carry out certain functions relating to the child on its behalf, a formal planning meeting involving representatives of the placing local authority should take place. The host local authority will take responsibility for chairing the meeting. In these circumstances, the authority may agree to undertake the following:
- a. Supervise the placement to be satisfied that the welfare of the child continues to be suitably provided for; and/or
 - b. Visit the placement on a regular basis,
 - c. Offer and complete return home interviews.
40. It would never be appropriate for the authority to agree to a request to supervise a child placed in secure accommodation and/or subject to Section 53 of the [Children and Young Persons Act 1933](#).
41. Where it is agreed at a planning meeting that the authority will undertake supervision of a placement on behalf of a placing authority, a social worker will be allocated. The placing local authority should be requested to provide sufficient information about the child and the placement to enable the social worker to supervise the placement competently, including the following:
- a. Care Plan,
 - b. Placement Information Record,
 - c. The most recent Review of Arrangements Form.
42. The agreement to supervise the placement should be detailed in writing and signed by a relevant senior manager in from the placing/home authority. It should include an expectation that the allocated social worker in the authority will be invited to contribute to the child's looked after review. Similar considerations to be made where the host offers and undertakes return-home interviews.
43. Where a significant incident arises in the placement whilst the child is placed, the authority where the child is placed will be expected to respond to the presenting needs. However, except in an absolute emergency (e.g., where it is not possible to contact the child's social worker or their team manager, or if out of hours the placing local authority's emergency

duty team), the authority should not take any significant action or remove the child, without consultation with placing local authority.

44. The authority should never act on the basis of the placing authority's verbal authority but must be certain that required actions are as a result of a written request. At all times case management responsibility remains with the placing authority.
45. In the event that the authority where the child is placed has to have an involvement in an emergency situation where the child is at risk of significant harm and the placing authority cannot be contacted, any action should be on the basis of the requirements of local Safeguarding Children Procedures.

Action in relation to professionals or placements/ settings causing concern.

46. [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) requires that every local authority has a designated officer role (LADO) responsible for the management and oversight of child protection allegations made against staff and volunteers who work with children and young people. The host authority LADO leads on any referrals, complaints, and concerns relating to the workforce in Children's Home and other provision in health and education in their local area.
47. Regulation requires the registered person to notify Ofsted, the placing authority, and other partners when a serious incident occurs. Some incidents are clearly defined as serious and will require an automatic notification, such as a child death (which must also be reported to the Secretary of State for Education) or an allegation of abuse against someone in the home.
48. Where there is an allegation which involves the co-ordination of cross border communication and activities, there should be clear identification of a single lead LADO. The guiding principle as to which LADO leads is where the organisational risk to a local authority rests.
49. Usually therefore, the LADO in the area where the service provided to child or young person is based, will act as lead LADO in the management of allegations. This allows for information and intelligence to be held in the most appropriate local authority to support the establishment of potential patterns of concern.
50. It is the responsibility of placing/home authority to record this locally, however the host LADO may consider liaising with the placing/home LADO.
51. Where there is a cause for concern in relation to a placement, including,

- a. Safeguarding concern,
- b. Current criminal investigation,
- c. Quality concern,
- d. Financial concern.

The placing local authority should contact their commissioning team to consider whether an [Information Sharing Protocol](#) notification is appropriate.

52. The ISP will be raised with the provider directly, Northwest ADCS will work alongside the provider and the local authority to develop an action plan or discuss next steps. ([See template and guidance for more information](#) – sign up needed).

53. The ISP is also available for North West local authorities to access. Where appropriate, notification of concerns will be provided via the Placement North West Information Sharing Protocol to LAs across the North West in addition to partner commissioning consortia.

End of Placement Process

54. It is the responsibility of the home local authority to inform the host local authority when the placement has come to an end. The notification must include the reason for the move. Any cause for concern regarding the placement, must be shared with the host local authority.

55. Notification with respect to children admitted into, or discharged from, a children's home - the registered person must notify, without delay, the local authority for the area in which the children's home is located of every discharge of a child from the home.

Review

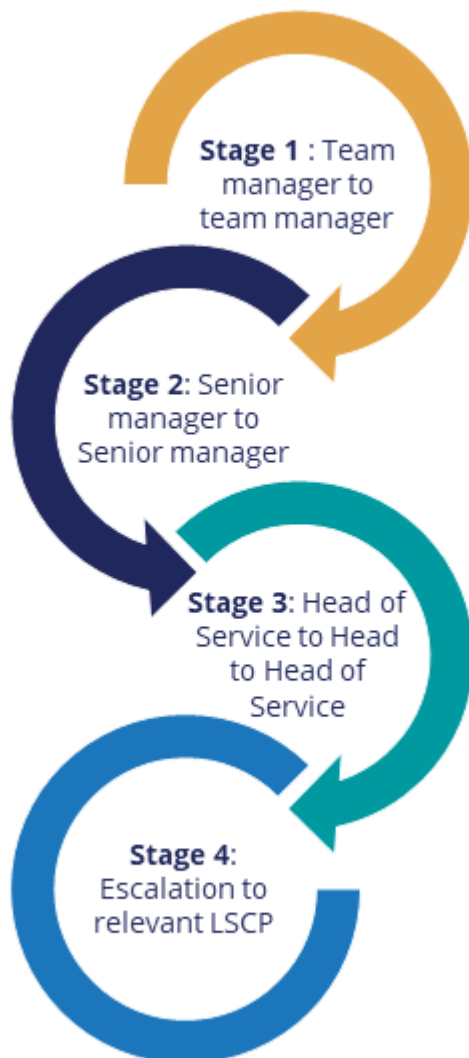
56. This procedure will be reviewed no later than **30 September 2025**.

Parties to the Procedure

The following local authorities are party to this procedure by virtue of their membership of the North West Association of Directors of Children's Services

- Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
- Blackpool Council
- Bolton Council
- Bury Council
- Cheshire East Council
- Cheshire West and Chester Council
- Cumberland Council
- Halton Borough Council
- Knowsley Council
- Lancashire County Council
- Liverpool City Council
- Manchester City Council
- Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
- Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council
- Salford City Council
- Sefton Council
- St Helens Council
- Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
- Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council
- Trafford Council
- Warrington Borough Council
- Westmorland and Furness Council
- Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council
- Wirral Council

Figure 1: Dispute resolution



Stage 1: Direct discussion should be held between the relevant team managers as a first option to try to resolve any dispute. This should be held through either telephone or face to face discussion as a priority and key points confirmed in writing.

Stage 2: If through direct discussion between SW team managers, either through telephone or face to face discussion, a resolution or agreement cannot be reached, then contact will need to be established between allocated senior manager for each local authority within 5 working days. Key points should be confirmed in writing and timescales with agreed actions.

Stage 3: If within 10 working days, a resolution has not been achieved then responsibility will transfer to the responsible Heads of Service to seek direct discussion in order to achieve resolution. Focus again will remain consistent on direct discussion first and foremost.

Stage 4: If at any point risk escalates to require Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures to be followed the lead practitioner must inform the SCP in the home authority for the child.

North West Template: Consultation for placements at a distance

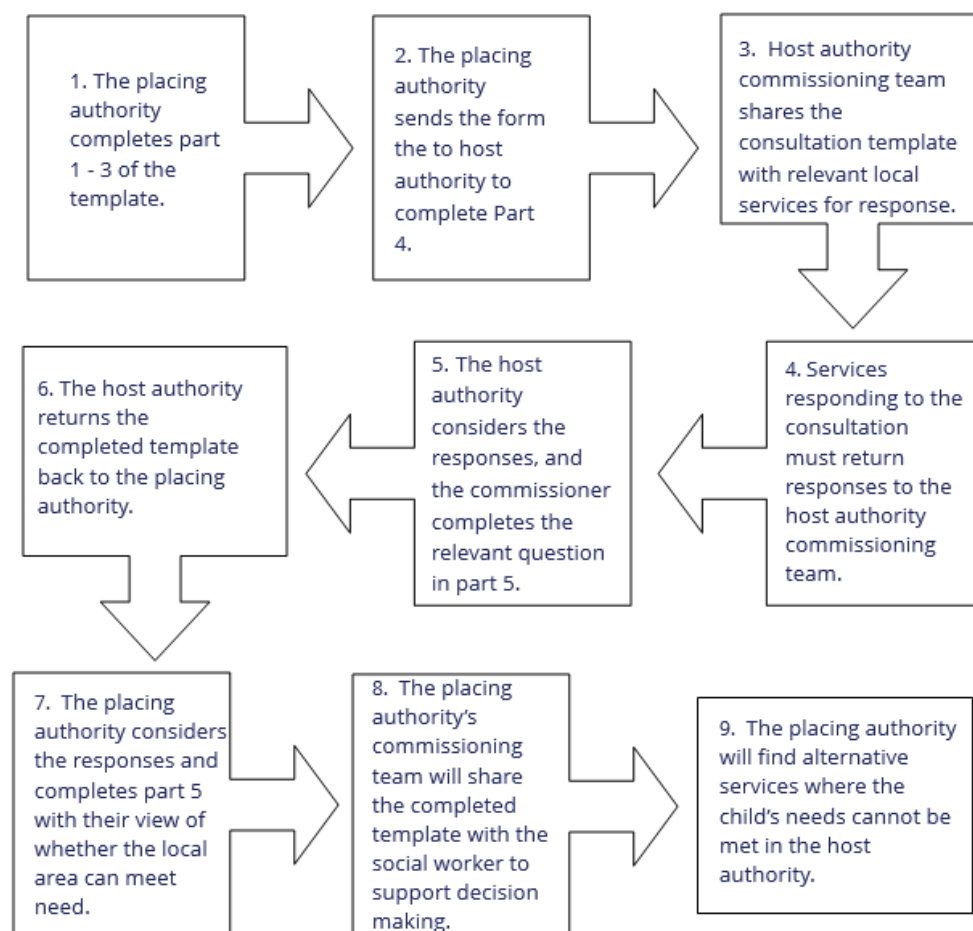
This template is to be used alongside [North West Procedure: Safeguarding children and young people placed across local authority boundaries.](#)

Aim

The template aims to:

- Facilitate the timely and consistent approach to sharing information between local authorities regarding the availability of local area services.
- Allow host authority commissioners to highlight if access to any services may be restricted.
- Enables the placing authority commissioner and social worker to consider alternative services, should they choose to place in the knowledge that not all services are available to meet the child's needs.

Process



Review and updates

The template for consultation for placements at a distance will be reviewed annually, in line with the [Annual review process for North West inter-authority procedures.](#)

North West Template: Consultation for placements at a distance

PART 1 – For completion by the placing Local Authority	
Child's URN	
Child's age (year and months)	
Child's gender (how they identify)	

PART 2 – For completion by the placing Local Authority			
Date information required			
Provider type (residential/ fostering/SAILS)		Placing Local Authority	
Provider Name		Host Local Authority	
Provider Address		Placing Local Authority commissioner contact	
Provider Company Number		Child's social worker name	
Provider Ofsted URN (if applicable/ alternative)		Child's social worker contact details	

PART 3 – The child's needs - completed by the placing Local Authority	
<p>Safeguarding</p> <p>Is the child currently supported by the safeguarding team? Will support to continue or transition once the child has moved home? Include relevant information from the placing Local Authority missing from home co-ordinator.</p>	
Please outline the child's needs:	Key contact information
	Name
	Title
	Email
	Telephone

<p>Health</p> <p>Which health services are required? This does not include primary services such as GP and Dentist but does include and not limited to, mental health/CAMHS, substance misuse and sexual health services.</p>	
Please outline the child's needs:	Key contact information
	Name
	Title
	Email
<p>Education</p> <p>What are the child's educational requirements? If the educational provision will change because of the placement, what plans are in place with the Host Local Authority; Virtual Head, Alternative Provision, Schools Lead?</p>	
Please outline the child's needs:	Key contact information
	Name
	Title
	Email
<p>SEN and/or disability</p> <p>Does the child have any specific educational or disability needs? During placement will there be any stage of transition? Is there an EHC plan?</p>	
Please outline the child's needs:	Key contact information
	Name
	Title
	Email
<p>Youth justice</p> <p>Please indicate if the child is open to the youth justice team and will require support from the Host Local Authority.</p>	
Please outline the child's needs:	Key contact information
	Name
	Title
	Email
<p>Police</p> <p>Please indicate any current police involvement that the Host Local Authority Police force should be made aware of.</p>	
Detail	Key contact information

	Name	
	Title	
	Email	
	Telephone	

Other services
Any other needs to be met by local services outside of the placement? For example, advocacy, mentoring, access to other activities within a local offer; sports, cadets etc.

Please outline the child's needs:	Key contact information	
	Name	
	Title	
	Email	
	Telephone	

PART 4 - For completion by the host Local Authority

Social care
Are there any current placements from the Host Local Authority with this provider? If so, what is the view of the placing social worker in relation to the provider and matching?

Response	Key contact information	
	Name	
	Title	
	Email	
	Telephone	

Safeguarding
Confirm with the safeguarding team if there are there any safeguarding concerns relating to the provider or the location of the placement?

Response	Key contact information	
	Name	
	Title	
	Email	
	Telephone	

LADO
In relation to the proposed placement provider and whether allegations were unsubstantiated or otherwise, is there information the LADO holds that would be relevant?

Response	Key contact information	
	Name	
	Title	

	Email	
	Telephone	
Health needs		
Is there is capacity to meet child's needs as described? Any significant delays to accessing services?		
Response	Key contact information	
	Name	
	Title	
	Email	
	Telephone	
Educational needs		
Is there capacity to meet the child's needs, as described. For example, school places or access to alternative provision?		
Response	Key contact information	
	Name	
	Title	
	Email	
	Telephone	
SEN and / or disability needs		
Response	Key contact information	
	Name	
	Title	
	Email	
	Telephone	
Education, Health and Care Plan		
Response	Key contact information	
	Name	
	Title	
	Email	
	Telephone	
Youth justice support		
Response	Key contact information	
	Name	
	Title	
	Email	

	Telephone	
Police involvement		
Response	Key contact information	
	Name	
	Title	
	Email	
	Telephone	
Commissioning		
Are there any organisational concerns about this provider? Does this provider engage with local provider forums or local contract monitoring?		
Response	Key contact information	
	Name	
	Title	
	Email	
	Telephone	
Local offer information		
Details	Key contact information	
	Name	
	Title	
	Email	
	Telephone	
Other Information		
Response	Key contact information	
	Name	
	Title	
	Email	
	Telephone	

PART 5 - For completion by the host and placing local authorities once responses have been collated.

Host Local Authority Commissioner	
Do you feel the local area services are able to meet the needs of this child?	Yes/No

Please provide a brief overview of the reason for the answer above.	
Placing Local Authority Commissioner	
Based on the information provided from the host authority, will you proceed with accepting the offer?	Yes/No
Please provide a brief overview of the reason for your answer above.	