

Unplanned Ending Guidance

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| Version 1 March 2026 | Monica O'Hanlon Locality Manager Michaela Porco, Team Manager FPT | Review Date: March 2028 |
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INTRODUCTION

There are many terms used when a care arrangement ends without planning such as care arrangement breakdown, disruption, unplanned ending. For this policy the following definitions are given.

Care arrangement Ending: refers to an ending of a care arrangement where the child has been formally linked and matched through the agencies Adoption & Permanency Panel therefore, all adoptions and matched Permanent care arrangements.

Unplanned Endings: refers to all other care arrangements which are ended without planning within a Child's plan therefore encompasses; young people living in children's houses, caregivers giving notice on care arrangements, young people choosing to leave the care arrangement and decisions made by the family placement team or locality team that the child needs are not being met and needs to move to an alternative care arrangement.

A meeting, record and plan should be identified following the unplanned ending of any care arrangement to consider the contributory factors to ending and inform relevant planning for the future needs of both the child or children and the caregivers affected by the ending. An unplanned ending refers to any arrangement which ends prior to fulfilling its purpose, regardless of notice served.

WHEN DO YOU CALL AN UNPLANNED ENDING MEETING?

Decisions about what type of meeting the situation demands will be made by the Team Manager for the child or young person or the caregiving family in discussion with their Locality Manager. However, as a rule the following guidance applies.

An Unplanned Ending Meeting **must** be convened in the following circumstances.

- When an adoptive care arrangement disrupts regardless of whether this is after the adoption has been granted or during the introduction phase.
- When a permanent care arrangement disrupts, as in the child or children have been formally linked and matched via the agencies Adoption & Permanency Panel.
- When a Permanent or Long-term Care arrangement ends where the child or children are living in named care arrangements even if they have not been formally linked or matched by the Adoption & Permanency Panel. This also covers any care arrangement of 12 plus months duration.

An Unplanned Ending Meeting **should** be convened in the following circumstances.

- When a child experiences two unplanned care arrangement endings in a 12-month period.
- When caregivers experience two unplanned care arrangement endings in a 12-month period.
- When a caregiver ends the care arrangement with or without notice.
- A care arrangement ends because of concerns that the caregiver is not meeting the needs of the child regardless of length of care arrangement.

CARE ARRANGEMENT STABILITY MEETING

If there is prospect of a care arrangement ending in an unplanned way, a Care Arrangement Stability Meeting **must** be held. This meeting should take place prior to any formal submission of 28 days' notice from care providers. Both the Child's Social Worker and Supervising Social Worker or Key worker in Children's houses must raise their concerns with their respective Line Manager. The meeting should be chaired by the Team Manager for the Child's Social Worker. (Negotiation can be had if this is an internal foster-care arrangement or adoptive care arrangement this decision will be agreed between relevant managers.)

The meeting will serve to assess the presenting situation, current supports and identify any additional supports or inputs which might address the pressures within the care arrangement.

If, at this meeting, it is decided that it is not feasible to continue the care arrangement, those present should identify and record the reasons why the care arrangement cannot be sustained and agree a plan to manage the ending as positively as possible. Formal notice of ending will be submitted by the care provider. If it is agreed that a care arrangement should end, the emphasis will be on offering an alternative care arrangement and every effort must be made to achieve this.

If the meeting relates to an internal or external fostering or adoption care arrangement, then the Family Placement Team (FPT) Assistant Team Manager should be present. If this relates to an internal or external Children's house placement then the Residential Team Manager should be present.

The Chair of the meeting will be responsible for notifying Senior Management of the need to identify an alternative care arrangement if required.

PLANNING & POSITIVE MANAGEMENT OF CARE ARRANGEMENT ENDINGS

Planning for a care arrangement ending should be as thorough a task as planning introductions. Both are life changing transitions for children and young people. Unless there is an unexpected risk to the child, the carers should be as involved as much as possible. The child's needs must be the focus, with careful planning around:

- Who will say what, when and where to the child?
- The pace and timing of the move?
- Arrangements, such as who will take/collect the child? (Both for introductions and the move itself)
- How will clothes/belongings be transferred?
- How will continuity for the child be maintained?

OBEJECTIVES OF THE UNPLANNED ENDING MEETING

Care arrangements breakdown through a combination of several factors. The objective of the Meeting is to look at the sequence of events and to learn from the experience. All participants need to know that the process is not an exercise in apportioning blame but a way of identifying why the ending happened and to avoid further disruptions in the future.

The Meeting will examine whether the care arrangement was appropriate. The Meeting also examines whether appropriate resources were provided to enable the care arrangement to continue. It offers the different agencies involved with the child/young person a chance to talk through the reasons for the care arrangement ending. The Meeting could identify trends and patterns that would contribute to a future Care Plan for the specific child or children as well as more general learning points for the agency/agencies concerned.

ARRANGING AN UNPLANNED ENDING MEETING

Who Arranges: The Child's Social Worker is the lead 'arranger' for the Meeting. This will ensure that the Ending process takes place on every occasion and not only on internal care arrangements. As the agency responsible for the Child impacted by the ending it is our responsibility to ensure due process is complete and future care plans are informed by the Child's needs, experiences and views. The 'arranger' should arrange to have invitations sent to the key participants at the meeting.

Chairing: All ending meetings will be chaired by a Team Manager in the service. This may be the TM from the Family Placement Team or Residential service but can also be any other TM in the children's service. Decisions will be made depending on the case specifics and who is best to lead.

Timescale: An unplanned ending meeting should usually be held within 4 - 8 weeks of the care arrangement ending. However, it is important to strike a balance between the meeting taking place too soon after the ending, when participants may be defensive, or too long after the ending, when participants may be less open to considering issues or may have rationalised events. (N.B. The above timescale may occasionally need to be adjusted to enable key participants to attend.)

Participants: Consideration needs to be given to the number of active participants and whether they need to attend throughout the meeting. The, at times, emotive nature of the meetings does however mean that it can be unhelpful for lots of people to move in and out of the meeting, particularly if the caregivers are attending. Attendance options should be discussed with the nominated Chair.

The following is a list of Participants of the Meeting for consideration **not** an invite list. Who needs to or should attend will vary from meeting to meeting and should be discussed with the Chair before invites sent;

- Team Manager as Chair;
- Minute taker;
- Caregivers, keyworker or adopters involved in the ending;
- Previous caregivers if appropriate;
- Current caregivers;
- Supervising Social Worker of carers involved in the unplanned ending;
- Private Fostering or Adoption Agency Representative;
- School - current and previous, especially the school attended during the unplanned ending phase;
- School Nurse/Health Visitor;
- Any other agencies involved with the child/young person;
- Social Worker, Assistant Team Manager representing the Child;

If there are not sufficient key participants available to attend The Meeting the Chair should decide whether the meeting should be rearranged.

The caregivers whether fostering or adoption will be expected to attend, and, in some situations, it may be beneficial for the child/young person to attend for all or part of the meeting. Birth parents may also be invited if it is felt that they could make a valid contribution. This must first be discussed and agreed with the Chair.

If a young person does not attend agreement must be reached about who is the most appropriate person to elicit the child's views (e.g. Social Worker, Advocate etc.).

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED TO THE CHAIR OF THE MEETING

The following is a list of suggested paperwork that might be relevant to the Chair dependant on each individual case, this includes:

- Care Arrangement Stability Meeting minutes. If available.
- Last LAC Review Documentation, including the Child's Plan.
- Care arrangement Plan.
- Last Foster Carer Review documentation.
- Any previous unplanned ending meeting minutes, that either the child or the caregiver has experienced.
- Child's Chronology from birth.
- Chronology of events leading up to the ending and the support that was provided.
- Contract (if other agency care arrangement).
- Child's Permanence Report/ Form F/ Prospective Adopter's Report.
- Matching Report/ Adoption Care arrangement Report/ Adoption Care arrangement Plan.
- Specific Care arrangement Ending feedback from Child, Carer, Supervising Social worker, Child's social worker and any other relevant member of the TAC.

The Allocated Social Worker will be responsible for providing the child's information and the Supervising Social Worker will be responsible for providing information about the caregiving family. The written information should be provided to the Chair five working days before the Meeting.

FORMAT OF THE MEETING

The format of the meeting will follow the Coram BAAF guidelines as follows:

- Child's life prior to entering the care system;
- Reason for care episode;
- Selection process of the carers/care arrangement;
- Introduction process to the carers;
- The recruitment, training and preparation of the carers;
- The consideration of the carer(s) by the Fostering and Adoption Panel;
- Care Planning process (including outcomes of Core and other assessments);
- Chronology of events leading to the disruption;

- Why the care arrangement does not meet the child/young person's needs;
- What could have made the care arrangement work?
- Were the LAAC Reviewing and Foster Carer Reviewing processes robust?
- Identification of disruptive patterns;
- Ending and subsequent events;
- Future Care Planning;
- Learning points;
- Conclusion and Recommendation.

RECORD OF THE MEETING

Accurate minutes of the meetings are made, providing a full account of everyone's contributions to the meeting, and the Chair's comments and conclusions to the meeting. Sensitive issues cannot be avoided in disruption meetings and should not be avoided in the minute

The Chair should elicit and clearly record the actions and decisions and make these available to agency personnel and others deemed appropriate. The record of the meeting will be distributed to all parties within 28 days of the meeting. Any feedback or comments regarding the Record of The Meeting should be returned to the Chair within 14 days of receipt. The minute will be accurately recorded in the child's file/carer's file

POTENTIAL OUTCOMES OF THE MEETING

Decisions about care arrangements for children and/or carers should not be delayed awaiting the outcome of the Meeting. The purpose of the Meeting is to look at the sequence of events and to learn from the experience not to make decisions about a Child's Plan specifically.

Any concerns about foster carers/adoptive parents when a care arrangement ends need to be addressed by the Fostering or Adoption Service at that time. The Meeting should consider whether an Early Review fostering Panel is required to further address concerns.

Fostering: Best practice would suggest that no further care arrangements should be made with the caregiving family until the Meeting has been held and its findings shared with the Family Placement Team. (An exception could be when a young adult leaves the care arrangement of his/her own choice.) If the outcome of the Meeting is that an early review Fostering or Adoption Panel is required, then no further care arrangements will be made pending the outcome of that Review.

Adoption: In the case of an Adoption care arrangement ending then no further matches or care arrangements will be considered or progressed pending the outcome of the Unplanned Ending Meeting.

If the meeting highlights practice issues for Falkirk Council staff, then normal procedures for handling such information should be used, i.e. through supervision or disciplinary procedures.

Falkirk Council may use the findings from the Meeting to learn from experience, to improve practice, to ensure that the service is providing the best possible care and support for both children/young people and caregivers and as a means of assuring quality of future service provision. It is therefore essential that the process is recorded well and the information is passed to relevant personnel within the Agency.

Appendix 1

CHILD/YOUNG PERSON'S FLOW CHART/CHRONOLOGY OF MOVES

Please fill in any major moves the child has experienced from birth to the present day.

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| Gender: | |
| DOB: | |

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**CARE ARRANGEMENT ENDING FEEDBACK FORM:
CHILD/YOUNG PERSON**

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|---|--|
| Child/Young Person Name | |
| Date of Birth | |
| Foster Carers/ Adopters | |
| Children's Houses or other Residential Care Arrangement | |
| Dates of Care Arrangement | |

This feedback form refers to your care arrangement with *(insert caregivers name)* and the circumstances which led to care arrangement ending. It would really help us to have your views about what living with *(insert caregivers name)* was like for you and how you feel about it ending.

Do you remember first meeting (insert caregivers name)?

Did you meet (insert caregivers name) before you went to live with them? How many times? Did you have a choice about moving?

What were the good things?

What would you have changed?

Did you feel you had enough support from others? (i.e. school, social work, health etc.)

Are there things that would have helped you more?

Do you know why your care arrangement ended with (insert names)? Can you tell us who told you and what was said?

What do you think would help you in the future?

Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Signature:

Date:

**CARE ARRANGEMENT ENDING FEEDBACK FORM:
FAMILY MEMBER**

| | |
|---|--|
| Child/Young Person Name | |
| Date of birth | |
| Foster Carers/ Adopters | |
| Children's Houses or other Residential Care Arrangement | |
| Dates of Care Arrangement | |

This report refers to your child's care arrangement with *(insert carers name)* and the circumstances which led to the care arrangement ending. Please tell us about your experience.

Were you involved in the introduction period? YES/NO

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| YES | NO |
| | |

If yes, how did you think these went?

Did you meet them prior to your child's move? How many times?

What were the positives about your child's time with these carers?

What would you have liked to be different?

Did you feel your child had enough support from others? (i.e. school, social work, health etc)

Are there things that you think would have helped him/her more?

Why do you think your child's care arrangement ended with?

What do you think would help your child in the future?

Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Signature:

Date:

**CARE ARRANGEMENT ENDING FEEDBACK FORM:
ADOPTERS/FOSTER CARERS**

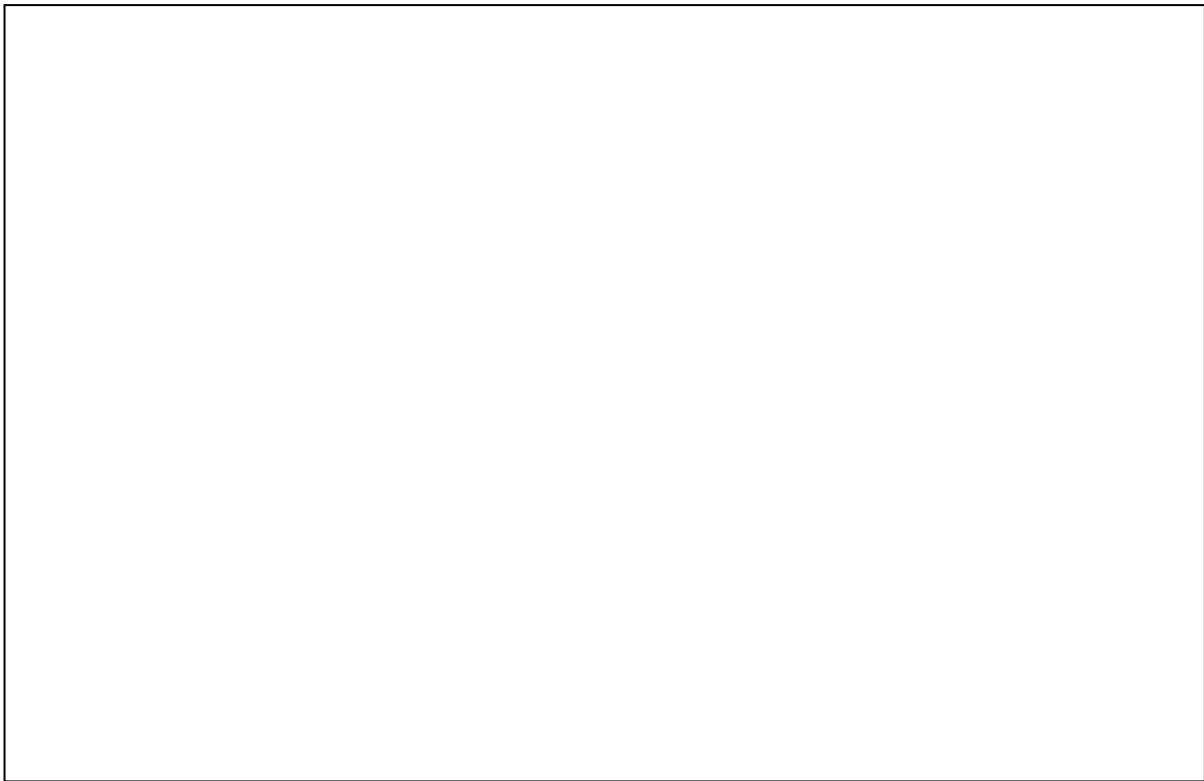
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| Child/Young Person Name | |
| Date of birth | |
| Foster Carers/ Adopters | |
| Dates of Care Arrangement | |

This feedback form refers to (insert names of child/young person) care arrangement with you and the circumstances which led to care arrangement ending. Please tell us about your experience.

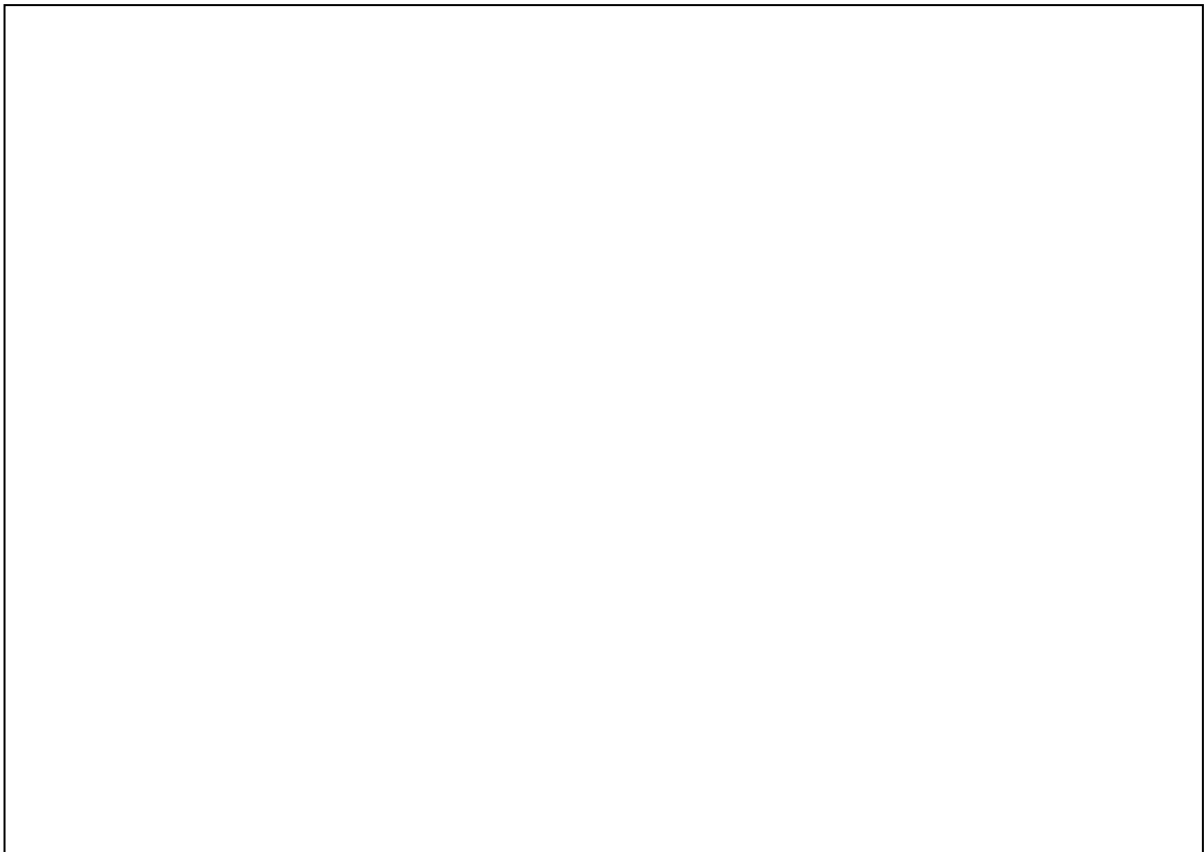
How was the matching and introductory period? (did you think this was a good match, was this within your remit? did you receive sufficient up to date information?)

How well prepared were you?

How well do you feel the child/young person was prepared?



How would you describe the care arrangement? (Positives and challenges)



Do you feel you received sufficient support?

Do you feel the child/young person received sufficient support?

What in your opinion contributed to the ending of this care arrangement?

Is there anything that may have prevented this?

What do you see as the child/young person's current priority needs?

Is there any other information you see as relevant?

Signature:

Date:

Please return to: **(Name of Chair) contact details**

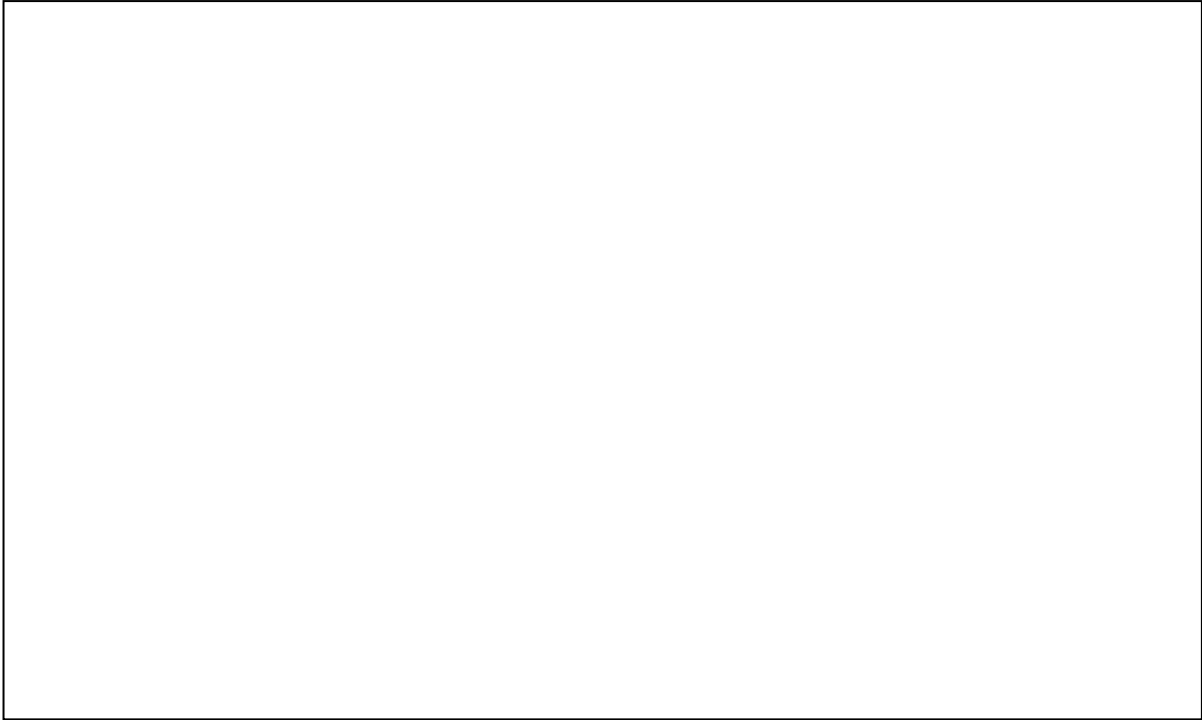
**CARE ARRANGMENT FEEDBACK FORM:
L.A. SOCIAL WORKER (Child or young person’s Social Worker,
Supervising Social Worker etc.)**

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| Child/Young Person Name | |
| Date of birth | |
| Foster Carers/ Adopters | |
| Dates of Care arrangement | |

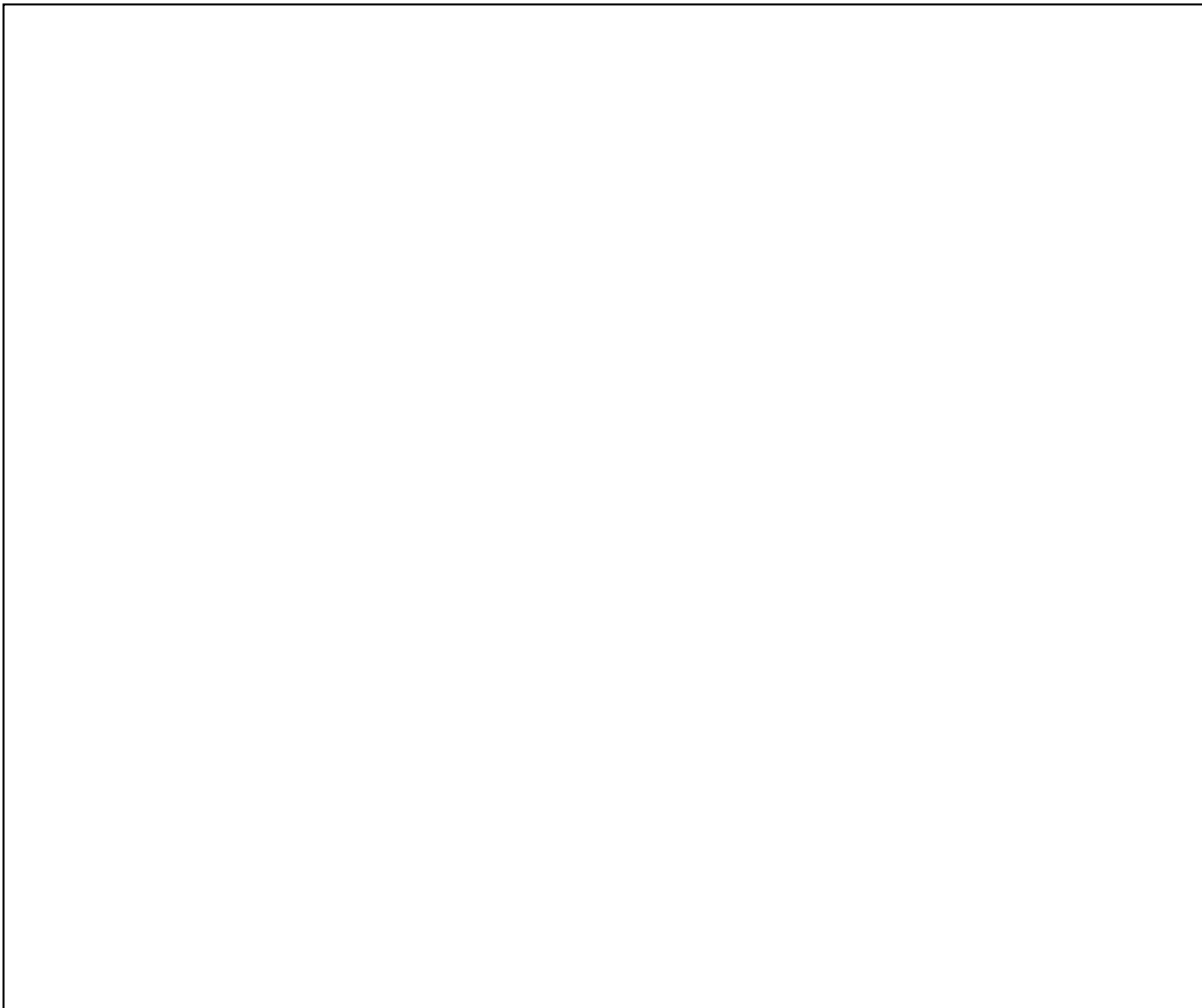
This report refers to (insert names of child/young person) care arrangement with (insert carers name) and the circumstances which led to the care arrangement ending. Please tell us about your knowledge and experience of;

Circumstances of the child/young person’s need to be looked after away from home.

Pattern of child/young person's life in care.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for handwritten notes or a diagram describing the pattern of a child's life in care.

Basis of decision to seek this care arrangement.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for handwritten notes or a diagram describing the basis of the decision to seek a specific care arrangement.

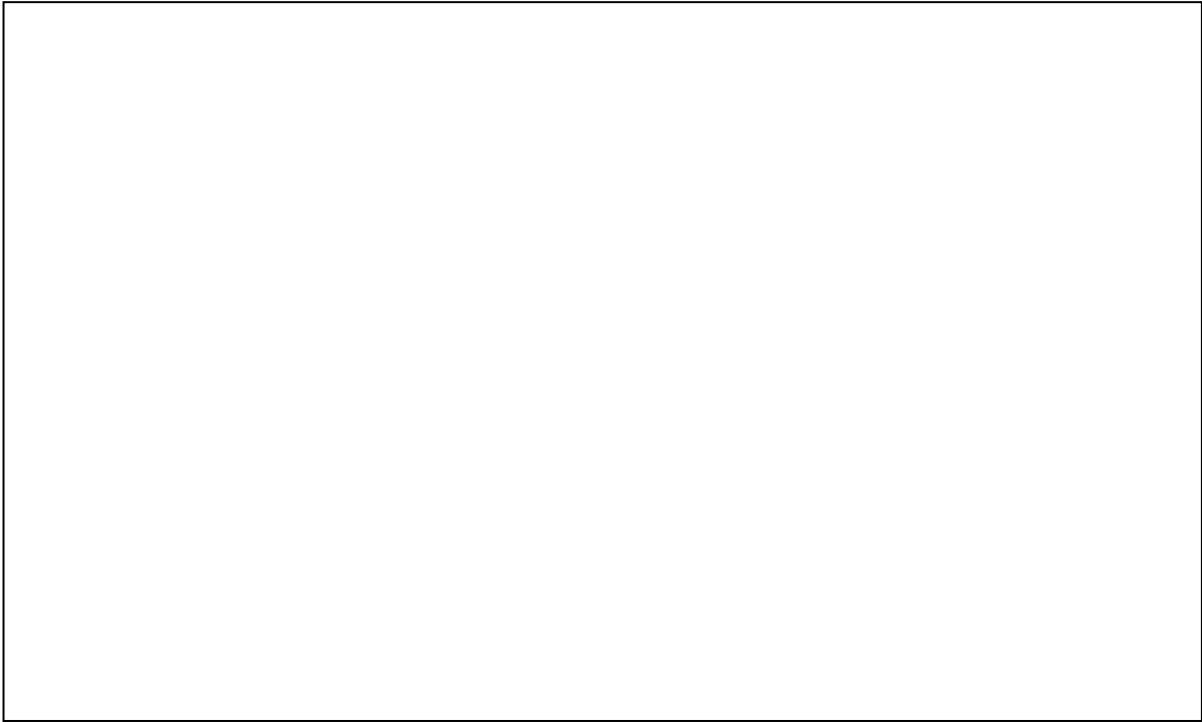
Assessment and preparation of the child/young person for this care arrangement.

[Empty box for assessment and preparation of the child/young person for this care arrangement.]

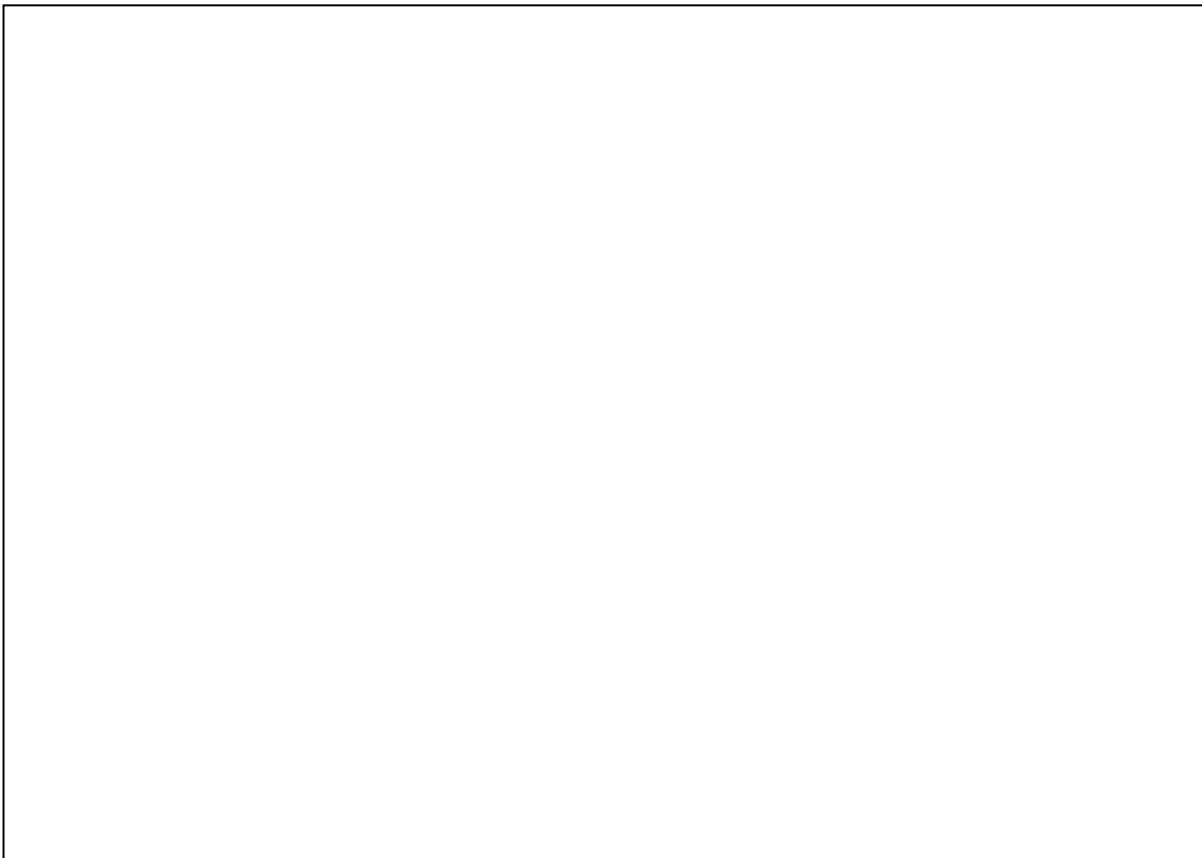
Assessment and preparation of the foster carers/adopters and the Panel recommendation of their suitability (if applicable).

[Empty box for assessment and preparation of the foster carers/adopters and the Panel recommendation of their suitability (if applicable).]

Matching and Panel recommendations and any challenges.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for handwritten notes or text.

The introductory period of the care arrangement.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for handwritten notes or text.

Overview of the care arrangement.

What in your opinion contributed to the ending of this care arrangement?

Events since the care arrangement ended.

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The child's current priority needs.

Any other information you see as relevant

Signature:

Date:

Please return to: ***(Name of Chair) contact details***

**CARE ARRANGEMENT ENDING FEEDBACK FORM:
TEAM AROUND THE CHILD MEMBER**

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|---|--|
| Child/Young Person Name | |
| Date of birth | |
| Foster Carers/ Adopters | |
| Children's Houses or other Residential Care Arrangement | |
| Dates of Care arrangement | |

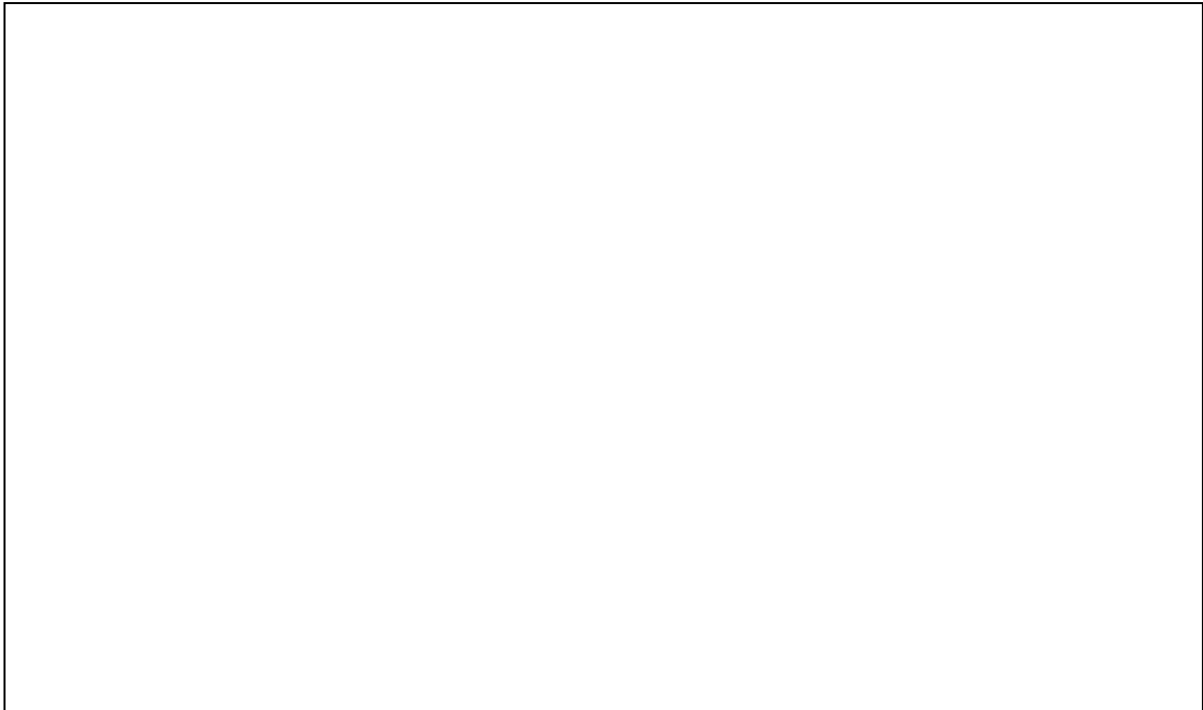
This report refers to (insert name of child/young person) with (insert carers name) and the circumstances which led to the care arrangement ending. Please tell us about your knowledge and experience of the following.

Circumstances of the child/young person's need to be looked after away from home.

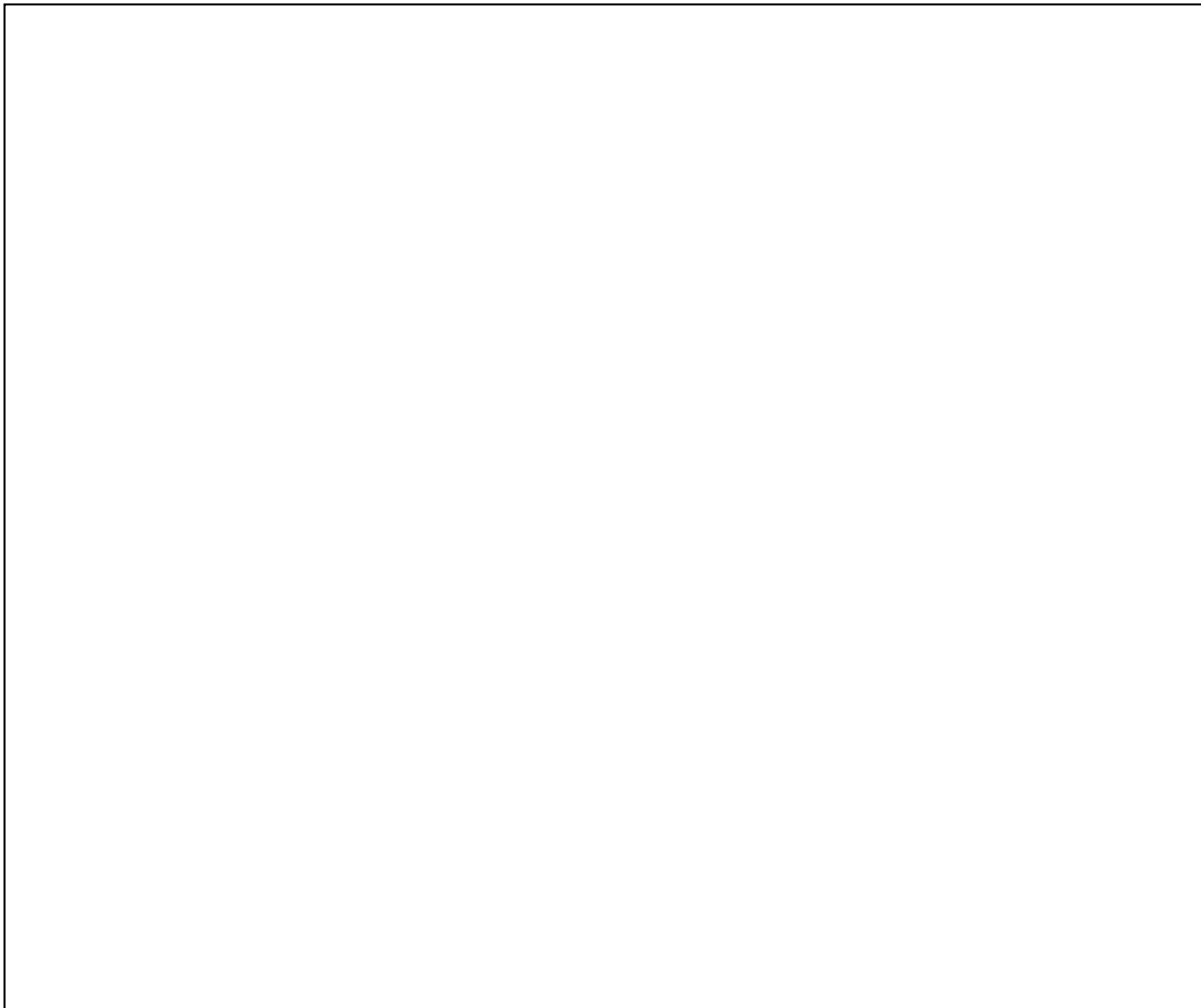
Circumstances of the child/young moving to this specific care arrangement and introduction phase.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to provide details about the circumstances of the child's move and the introduction phase.

The Care arrangement's ability to meet the child/young person's needs.



What in your opinion contributed to the ending of this care arrangement.



Events since the care arrangement ended.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for recording events since the care arrangement ended. The box is currently blank.

The child/young person's current priority needs.

Any other information you see as relevant

Signature:

Date:

Please return to: ***(Name of Chair) contact details***

**CARE ARRANGEMENT ENDING FEEDBACK FORM:
CHILDREN'S HOUSES or OTHER RESIDENTIAL CARE ARRANGEMENT**

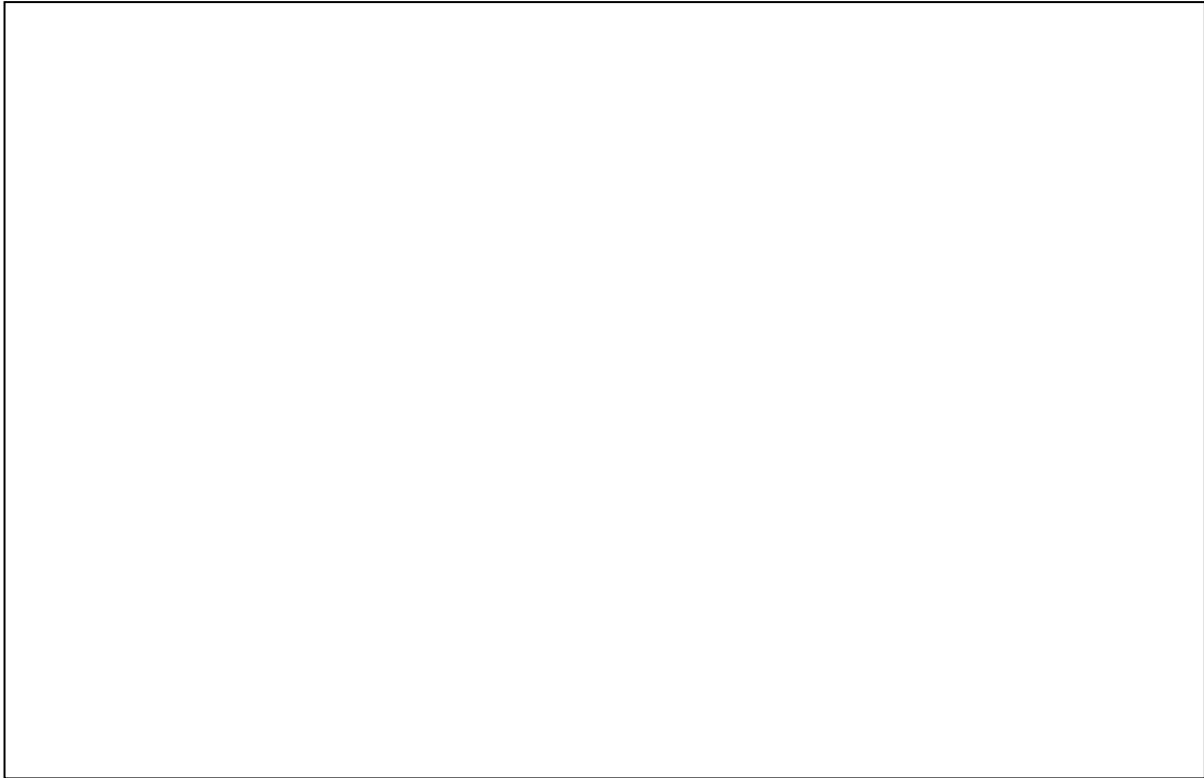
| | |
|---|--|
| Child/Young Person Name | |
| Date of birth | |
| Children's Houses or other Residential Care Arrangement | |
| Dates of Care Arrangement | |

This feedback form refers to (insert names of child/young person) care arrangement with you and the circumstances which led to care arrangement ending. Please tell us about your experience.

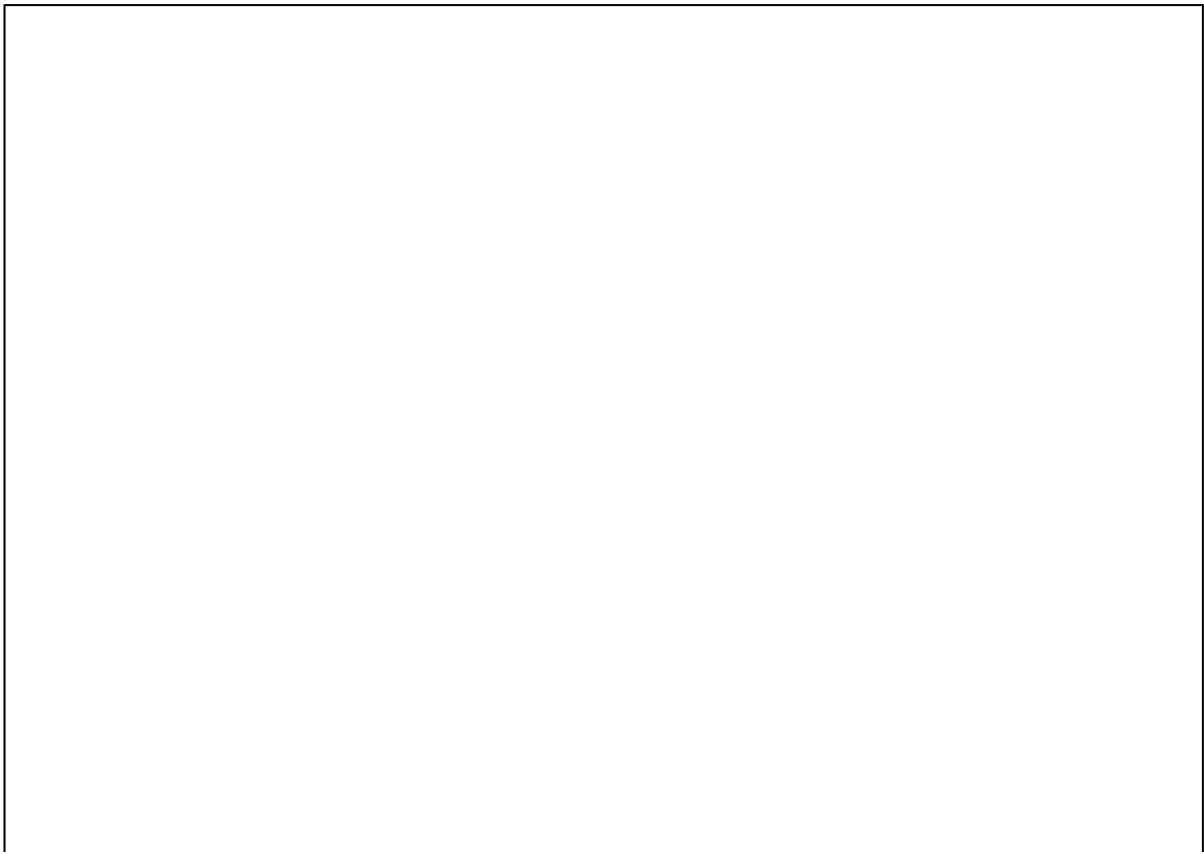
How was the matching and introductory period? (did you think this was a good match, was this within your remit? did you receive sufficient up to date information?)

How well prepared were you?

How well do you feel the child/young person was prepared?



How would you describe the care arrangement? (Positives and challenges)



Do you feel you received sufficient support?

Do you feel the child/young person received sufficient support?

What in your opinion contributed to the ending of this care arrangement?

Is there anything that may have prevented this?

What do you see as the child/young person's current priority needs?

Is there any other information you see as relevant?

Signature:

Date:

Please return to: **(Name of Chair) contact details**