



HOME BASED CARE PLACEMENT SUPERVISION AND HOME BASED CARER SUPPORT POLICY

1. POLICY PURPOSE AND RATIONALE

The skills and attributes of Home Based Care carers (from this point referred to as carers) are central to the provision of care and support for children and young people in Home Based Care (HBC).

It is essential that a sound working relationship exists between the Community Service Organisation (CSO) and carers that is based on mutual respect and trust. It is therefore important that the CSO provides appropriate supervision and adequate support to its carers at all times.

Anglicare Victoria values the contribution of carers and recognises that their needs are separate to the support needs of the children and young people in their care.

The organisation recognises that active HBC placement supervision enhances a carer's performance as it recognises their importance and their contribution to the safety, welfare and well-being of the child or young person. Active HBC placement supervision also promotes carer self-esteem and increases a carer's understanding of the HBC system.

The aim of this formal relationship is to develop a partnership between the organisation and the carer through the provision of support and guidance to ensure the ongoing safety and wellbeing of children and young people in home based care.

This policy therefore aims to provide an outline of Anglicare Victoria's basic requirements in supervising HBC placements and supporting carers, taking into account the Department of Human Services *Program Requirements for Home Based Care Services in Victoria* as well as the *Department of Human Services Standards evidence guide*, December 2011.

2. DEFINITIONS

HBC Placement supervision

HBC Placement Supervision is focused on the progress and behaviour of the child or young person. This form of guidance is aimed at ensuring the maintenance of an effective, positive, stable and supportive environment for the child or young person.

Records of HBC placement supervision sessions should be kept on the child or young person's file.

Carer Support

Carer support is a formal contact arrangement between the carer and their allocated caseworker or volunteer recruitment and support worker. This form of support is not related to the child or young person specifically but to the skills, attributes, capacities and needs of the carer.

Carer support should create a safe space to enable a carer to develop and enhance their skills and the work they do. HBC staff are able to assist carers by offering new ways of working and providing up-to-date materials, videos and techniques for working with children and young persons in care.

Records of carer support sessions should be kept on the carer's file. Anglicare Victoria staff need to remember that carers are volunteers, not paid employees and that recording their personal issues or other matters would set them up for problems if the file was subpoenaed for Court. Very carefully crafted practice guidance about what may be, must and must not be recorded need to be developed and training provided for HBC staff and management.

Care Team

A team of people most often comprised of the carer, Anglicare Victoria worker, DHS Protective Worker and birth parents or significant other birth family members but can also include other relevant people such as respite carers, medical professionals, etc.

Group Support

Group support involves more than one carer along with at least one but possibly more HBC staff and a Team Leader. In many cases, this form of support may involve up to 6 - 8 people in each session. The aim is to provide both group and peer support within a learning and skill development frame, which may focus on particular themes or issues that carers may be experiencing.

Attendance at group support meetings is not mandatory for carers, but HBC staff should actively welcome and encourage carers' attendance. HBC must be supported in ways that best suit their circumstances, as assessed by them (e.g. geographic isolation, work and family commitments), and they must not be asked to commit to activities more than they wish. HBC staff can support carers through home or office visits where there is a need, usually by consensus.

Annual Carer Review

An Annual Carer Review is a formal contact arrangement between HBC staff and the carer. This meeting is conducted annually to confirm the continuing appropriateness and availability of the carer.

This annual review is documented and will provide a reference point to highlight strengths, address learning needs, better understand and reflect upon past placements and issues that they may have experienced as well as receive honest and open feedback regarding the carer / agency relationship.

Additionally, there must be an updated fire safety evacuation plan, self-assessment medical form and an updated and signed caregiver agreement.

This annual review must be documented and placed on the carer's file.

On Call Support

On Call support is provided to carers 24 hours, 7 days per week. On Call is performed by paid employees who work in a home based care program directly responsible for the supervision and support of the carer. Anglicare Victoria has a number of home based care programs across the state all of which have the provision of an On Call service.

The aim of the On Call service is to provide immediate after hours support where a carer may be experiencing a major incident, where there is an urgent need for alternative care, in situations where a child or young person is injured or becomes seriously unwell, where a carer is required to restrain a child or young person, where a carer may experience family or personal issues which may impact on their ability to continue to care for a child or young person or where a carer requires immediate support or advice in relation to the care and wellbeing of a child or young person.

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing is available to carers who have been directly involved in situations where a child or young person has behaved violently to themselves or others, where there has been a serious accident resulting in severe injury or death, where a carer is suffering from the cumulative effects of multiple incidents or a major stressor has occurred.

In order to access Critical Incident Stress Debriefing, caseworkers / case managers must consult with the Home Based Care Team Leader. In the Team Leader's absence, caseworkers / case managers must consult with the relevant Program Manager / Senior Services Manager or Regional Director who will approve and facilitate referral for debriefing.

It is important to note that Critical Incident Stress Debriefing can only be approved by the Home Based Care Team Leader, Program Manager, Senior Services Manager or Regional Director.

3. PROCEDURES

Placement Supervision

The Department of Human Services Program Requirements for Home Based Care Services and the Department of Human Services Standards evidence guide, December 2011 set out specific minimum expectations of CSOs to ensure the child or young person's safety, wellbeing, stability and permanence. CSOs must ensure that a placement is able to meet the child or young person's individual needs, which will vary significantly and may include factors such as disability or mental health issues. Carers therefore need to be adequately supported and trained to provide appropriate care.

Anglicare Victoria caseworkers / case managers will strive to ensure that on average they have fortnightly contact with carers who have children or young people in their care. The preference is for face to face contact, but additional contact may also be over the phone on other occasions to compensate for less frequent face-to-face contact. If workers have to travel more than two hours for a home visit it is likely that more phone

contact will be made than face-to-face contact. At any rate there needs to be flexibility to respond to the assessed needs and wishes of the carer.

As part of this contact, it is also expected that caseworkers / case managers have individual face to face contact with the child/ren (age appropriate) or young person in the carer's care. This form of contact must be, in part, separate to that of the contact with the carer. This form of contact allows the caseworker / case manager to gauge the child or young person's response to the placement.

The focus placement supervision relates directly to the progress of the child or young person. Where placement issues are raised by the carer or caseworker, it is the caseworker's responsibility to ensure that the child or young person's DHS Protective Worker or case manager is notified as soon as practicable.

Where the child or young person is case managed by Anglicare Victoria, it is the case manager's responsibility to provide information to the Department of Human Services Child Protection Liaison Officer on the progress of the child / young person.

It is the responsibility of the caseworker to provide carers with strategies and supports to ensure that the placement of the child or young person is maintained and well supported.

A record of each contact with the carer, child / young person should be placed in the child / young person's file.

Initial Placement Support

The Department of Human Services *Program Requirements for Home Based Care Services* and *Department of Human Services Standards evidence guide*, December 2011 set out specific minimum expectations of a CSO that the Looking After Children (LAC) process be applied and that a "Care & Placement Plan" be developed as soon as possible and within the first two weeks of a placement.

The Care & Placement Plan is developed in conjunction with the child / young person's CSO caseworker, the child / young person's departmental child protection worker, the carer, other relevant professionals, the child / young person and their family (where appropriate). This is known as the Care team.

Anglicare Victoria HBC staff / case managers will strive to ensure that in the first four weeks of placement, face to face contact occurs with the carer at least once per week on average. The purpose of this contact is to ensure that the day to day needs of the child / young person are monitored, as well as the carer being provided with support to ensure that the placement of the child / young person is maintained.

It is the HBC caseworker's responsibility to organise and facilitate a Care & Placement Plan meeting. This initial meeting will be organised in consultation with the Home Based Care Team Leader. In some instances, this meeting may be chaired by the Home Based Care Team Leader.

A copy of the Care & Placement Plan is provided to all members of the Care Team. A copy of the Care & Placement plan and the reported progress should be placed on the child / young person's LAC file.

Planning, Review and Ongoing Support

The Department of Human Services Program Requirements for Home Based Care Services and Department of Human Services Standards evidence guide set out specific minimum expectations of CSOs in relation to the planning, management and review of day to day arrangements for children and young people in home based care, in accordance with the child or young person's Statutory Case Plan.

Anglicare Victoria HBC staff will ensure that each child or young person's Care & Placement Plan is reviewed regularly, within 4 weeks of placement, within 3 months of placement and 6 monthly thereafter, or more frequently as needed.

It is the responsibility of the HBC caseworker to ensure that the Care & Placement Plan is reviewed. This plan is to be monitored by the Home Based Care Team Leader during supervision or other mechanisms that may be in place at a local level.

For all children or young people whose custody and guardianship remains with their parents, it is important for the HBC caseworker and Home Based Care Team Leader to ensure that the Child Care Agreements are negotiated in accordance with the legislative, regulatory and Departmental requirements relating to voluntary placements.

Placement Stability

The Department of Human Services *Program Requirements for Home Based Care Services* and *Department of Human Services Standards evidence guide* sets out specific minimum expectations of CSOs in relation to placement changes.

Placement stability is generally a predictor of good outcomes for children and young people in OHC and therefore, Anglicare Victoria and its carers will make every effort to minimise the number of placement changes that a child or young person experiences.

Where there are indications that a placement may be disrupted, Anglicare Victoria HBC staff will meet with the child or young person's Care Team to develop plans aimed at stabilising and securing the existing placement or moving a child / young person to a more appropriate placement. This meeting must take place as soon as practicable and must be done in consultation with the Home Based Care Team Leader.

Where a placement change is required, it is expected that the HBC caseworker will consult with the Home Based Care Team Leader prior to informing the Department of Human Services. This placement change must be approved by the Department prior to the change taking place.

Where approval has occurred, it is the responsibility of HBC staff to work cooperatively with the carer, the child / young person's DHS Protective Worker / case manager, the child / young person, their family (where appropriate) and all other parties concerned to ensure a smooth transition for the child or young person.

Where a placement change occurs, it is the responsibility of HBC staff to ensure that the Care Team negotiates the allocation of the task and arranges for the child / young person's belongings to be transferred to the new placement.

It is also the responsibility of HBC staff to ensure that the carer returns all relevant material including LAC documentation in relation to the child / young person to the agency. In

the event of a child or young person being placed with a different program or agency, the LAC documentation should be forwarded to the program or agency by the HBC staff.

In the event of a placement change / breakdown, Anglicare Victoria will provide feedback and support to carers. HBC staff are required to conduct an 'End of Placement Review' with the carer. This review process should commence as soon as possible, about a minimum of three days, but no longer than a maximum of four weeks after the end of placement. The carer's needs and desires must be given careful attention in this process.

This process allows the carer to provide feedback relating to the placement, their response to the needs of the child or young person, identified training needs, working with the agency as well as any changes that may have taken place and issues that may have been experienced. This process also provides opportunity for the caseworker to discuss any actions that the carer or case worker feels needs to be addressed.

This End of Placement Report must be placed on the carer file.

Carer Support

Program Requirements for Home Based Care Services in Victoria as well as the *Department of Human Services Standards evidence guide* sets out specific minimum expectations of CSOs in relation to formal carer support.

Anglicare Victoria will strive to ensure that formal and informal carer support is provided as needed by consensual agreement between HBC staff and the carer. In addition to this, formal carer support may also take the form of group support. This will be dependent on the needs of the carer and their agreement to participate in a group process.

Carers are required to partake in ongoing learning and development, involvement in new initiatives, involvement in other local, regional and agency-wide initiatives introduced under the 'Focus on Carers' Strategy, discussion of ongoing issues or presenting themes.

Participation in formal support activities must be recorded and placed separately on the carer file.

Annual Carer Reviews

Program Requirements for Home Based Care Services in Victoria as well as the *Department of Human Services Standards evidence guide* set out a specific requirement that CSOs must undertake an overall carer performance review.

As part of the CSOs ongoing carer supervision, this review must be formally undertaken annually to confirm continuing appropriateness and availability of the carer.

Anglicare Victoria will ensure that all carers are provided with an overall performance review. An Annual Review Report must be completed in situations where there are changes in the carer's circumstances or home environment, or where the Anglicare Victoria case worker in consultation with the Home Based Care Team leader feel that a formal review process occurs.

Where a carer has only had one child or young person in their care over a twelve month period, or where a carer has not had a placement during the year, but is available to provide care, the caseworker will complete an Annual Review Report. The caseworker is required to meet with the carer and complete the relevant sections of the report. This meeting may take place over one session or a number of sessions.

Once the Annual Review Report is completed, the caseworker must ensure that the report is read by the carer, amendments are made prior to the carer signing this. The Home Based Care Team Leader is also required to sign the report.

If there have been significant changes to the carer's personal, family or home situation, this report must be presented to the Foster Care Assessment & Accreditation Panel (AAC) for review. The Annual Review Report and an excerpt of the relevant minutes of the ACC meeting that considered the report must be placed on the carer's file.

If there has not been significant changes to the carer's personal, family or home situation over the previous year the Annual Review Report is placed on the carer's file and a recommendation to renew the carer's accreditation should be presented to the AAC for ratification.

An Annual Review Report however is not required for those carer's who have had a number of placements throughout the year. The end of placement reviews are sufficient and a recommendation to renew the carer's accreditation should be presented to the AAC for ratification.

On Call Support

Anglicare Victoria requires that all carers contact the On Call service as soon as possible after a crisis situation or emergency has occurred or when they require urgent advice or support. This may involve situations where there is a hospital admission, death, serious injury, or where a carer may require support during a time of uncertainty or unease.

In these situations, it is the responsibility of the On Call worker to provide support to the carer. The On Call worker is also required to contact the Program Manager who will in turn contact the Senior Services Manager and/or the Regional Director where required (for example, if a Category 1 Critical Incident has occurred).

In situations where a child or young person on a statutory Order has been involved in the crisis or emergency, it is the responsibility of the On Call worker to contact After Hours Child Protection to inform them of the crisis / emergency.

This contact needs to be documented and placed in the child / young person's file. A DHS Incident Report is to then be completed the next working day. This needs to be prioritised.

Critical Incident Stress Management

Anglicare Victoria case workers will arrange for carers to receive critical incident debriefing if there has been a situation or incident where this is warranted.

In order to access Critical Incident Stress Debriefing, case workers / case managers must consult with their respective Home Based Care Team Leaders. In the Team Leader's absence, case workers / case managers must consult with the relevant Program Manager / Senior Services Manager and/or the Regional Director who will approve and facilitate referral for debriefing. It is important to note that Critical Incident Stress Debriefing can only be approved by the Home Based Care Team leader, Program Manager, Senior Services Manager or Regional Director.

4. RELATED DOCUMENTS

Alison Ingram, Anglicare, Southern Queensland: Supervision of Foster HBC Carers:

http://www.croccs.org.au/downloads/2005_conf_papers/AlisonIngramCROCCSPaper.pdf

Department of Human Services Standards evidence guide, December 2011 which is available from the department's website at: <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/department-of-human-services-standards>

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Any queries about this policy or related procedures should be directed to:

General Manager, Placement and Support