

OUR PATHWAY HOME

BRINGING FAMILIES BACK TOGETHER
2026-2029



CONTENTS

1	Policy purpose	4
1.1	Policy context	4
1.2	Definition of pathway home	5
1.3	What pathway home means in Telford and Wrekin	5
2	Scope	6
2.1	Kinship Care	6
2.2	Legislation and statutory duties	6
3	Practice principles	8
	Child centred, rights based, and inclusive practice	8
	Family led and relational working	8
	Circle of Support Meetings (Family Group Decision Making Meetings)	9
	Trauma and attachment aware practice	9
	Evidence based and reflective decision making	9
4	Roles and responsibilities	10
5	Pathway home assessment, decision making and transition planning	15
5.1	Pre-screen (within 10 working days of identification)	15
5.2	Referral for Initial Change in Support Consultation Meeting (within five working days of completed pre-screen)	16
5.3	Circle of Support Meeting (FGDM)	17
5.4	Pathway home assessment and intervention (up to 45 working days)	17
5.5	Change in Support Planning Meeting (within 5 working days of positive assessment)	18
5.6	Placement with parents assessment, transition and move home, support and stability plan	18
5.7	Continuation of change in support process	19
5.8	Planned placement with parents following final care orders	20
6	Visiting standards and review frequencies	21
6.1	Before return (during assessment and transition)	21
6.2	After return home	21
6.3	Reviews, personal education plans, and care planning	22
6.4	Revocation of Care Order	22
6.5	Post-pathway home support	23

7	Unplanned placement with parents	25
7.1	Principles for decision making in unplanned returns home	25
7.2	Immediate placement with parents	26
7.3	Authorisation and recording	26
7.4	Stability planning	27
7.5	Assessment and review requirements	27
7.6	Statutory visiting	28
7.7	Support and stabilisation	28
8	Key practice considerations	29
8.1	Identity, culture and belonging	29
8.2	Advocacy and the child's voice	29
8.3	Sibling relationships	29
8.4	Education, stability and attendance	29
8.5	Health and wellbeing	29
8.6	Digital safety and access	30
8.7	Financial stability and participation	30
8.8	Family and community support relationships	30
9	Complaints and feedback	32
10	Outcomes and measures of success	33
11	Appendix	34
	Pathway home transition plan (Schedule 3)	35
	Core components of the transition plan	35
	Transition planning guidance	35
	Individualised planning	35
	Use of sleepovers	35
	Shared plan	36
	Reviewing progress	36
	Example: Transition Plans	36

1 POLICY PURPOSE

This policy sets out a single, unified pathway home process for cared for children aged 0 to 18. Its purpose is to support safe, timely, and sustainable returns home through relational practice, structured assessment, family-led planning, and coordinated multi-agency support. Pathways home enables children to live safely within their family network, including parents, wider family members and those who are important to them, where this promotes safety, belonging and long-term stability.

Our Pathway Home Guidance sits within Telford and Wrekin's wider Pathway to Support and should be understood as part of a continuum of help and protection, rather than a stand-alone process. Children and families may move between statutory care, safeguarding and family help, and pathway home planning must ensure continuity of relationships, assessment and support across this pathway.

Our local approach is relational, strengths-based and systemic, recognising that children achieve the best outcomes when cared for within safe and supportive relationships. Pathway Home planning must therefore intentionally strengthen family relationships and involve wider family members and trusted adults around each child.

Pathways home are a dynamic and evolving journey over time, and not a single event. The pathway begins early, is reviewed regularly, and continues before, during and after a child has returned home. Ongoing support enables parents to sustain change, recognises positive progress and ensures families are not left to manage challenges alone.

Assessment activity will operate as part of Telford and Wrekin's assessment protocol, meaning that all tools and processes within this pathway contribute to an evolving understanding of the child's needs, family relationships, strengths and risks.

1.1 Policy context

This policy sits within Telford and Wrekin Children's Services' Families First Partnership Programme, Pathway to Support and Local Practice Framework. It reflects national expectations within the Children's Social Care reform programme and supports our approach of relational, family-led and multi-agency practice.

A pathway home should not be viewed as separate from early help or safeguarding activity. Instead, representing a transition within the same system, where children and families move along a continuum of support. This requires consistency in practice, shared language and coordinated multi-agency involvement at every stage.

The policy is informed by the Children Act 1989, Care Planning Regulations 2010 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026, alongside our local practice approaches including our use of Valuing Care and Circles of Support.

1.2 Definition of pathway home

A Pathway home is a strengths-based and carefully planned process, which supports a looked after child's return from care to their parent or parents, or, where this is assessed as the most appropriate family-based permanence option, to their wider family. The process is supported by ongoing statutory assessment, relational planning, family led support, and multi-agency involvement, with the aim of securing safe, nurturing, and lasting family care.

1.3 What pathway home means in Telford and Wrekin

In Telford and Wrekin, a pathway home is recognised as a key permanence pathway. The Local Authority is committed to ensuring that any return home is carefully planned, holistically assessed, and supported before, during and after the move.

Planning considers patterns of interaction within the family, wider family and other people around the child who are important to them, recognising that change is sustainable through shifts in relationships, roles, and support. Pathway home activity therefore considers the child's relationships, culture, heritage and identity, helping them remain connected to who they are and where they come from.

In some circumstances, a child may return to living with a parent at short notice. This means a child's return home takes place before the usual pathway home planning is complete. An unplanned pathway home carries increased risk of instability; therefore, the same standards of assessment, stability planning, and multi-agency oversight must be applied without delay.

Where an unplanned return home does occur, including when a child accommodated under Section 20 leaves unexpectedly or states that they are going home, this must be treated as an unplanned placement with parents. The Social Worker must take immediate action to promote the child's safety and stability. This includes immediately engaging wider family members and other people who are important to the child, alongside relevant partner agencies, convening a family group response, and arranging a care planning meeting.

The purpose is to clarify the immediate plan, assess any current or potential harm, identify available support within the family and from involved professionals, and implement a clear safety and support plan. Although the full pathway home pathway may not be achievable in these circumstances, the core principles of safety, partnership, and timely planning must still guide practice.

Where a child returns home prior to a full assessment having been completed, statutory requirements and timescales must still be met. This includes completing the placement with parents' assessment and the child in care review within 10 working days of the move, making a prompt decision about whether the placement continues, and providing enhanced visiting and support during this transition period.

Further detail on the unplanned placement with parents' pathway is provided in section seven of this policy.

2 SCOPE

This policy applies to all children and young people aged 0 to 18 in the care of Telford & Wrekin Council. It applies to all Children's Services practitioners and managers, partner agencies (health, education and SEND, housing, early help, youth justice), and commissioned services who contribute to assessment, planning, supporting, and review, in line with the Families First Partnership approach.

A single, consistent pathway home process and set of standards applies for all children and young people, ensuring equity, clarity, and continuity across every age and stage of development. Support will remain in place for as long as required to promote the stability of a sustainable pathway home.

2.1 Kinship care

Although this policy applies primarily to children who are looked after, the principles within this pathway should also inform practice for children living within kinship care arrangements, including private arrangements, Child Arrangements Orders (CAO), and Special Guardianship Orders (SGO).

Our pathway home principles reflect the importance of supporting children to live safely within their family networks wherever possible, regardless of legal status. In relevant circumstances, practitioners should work alongside the kinship team to ensure planning, support, and oversight are coordinated and proportionate to the child's needs.

2.2 Legislation and statutory duties

A pathway home is a statutory permanence pathway for children who are looked after and is governed by national legislation and statutory guidance. Where a child returns home from care, whether on a planned or unplanned basis, the Local Authority retains clear duties to safeguard and promote the child's welfare, to act lawfully and proportionately, and to support stability over time.

This policy is informed by the Children Act 1989, which sets out the Local Authority's responsibilities towards children it looks after and establishes the child's welfare as the paramount consideration. The Act requires the Local Authority, as corporate parent, to promote children's wellbeing, give due consideration to their wishes and feelings, and to ensure that any decision to return a child to family care is supported by evidence that their needs can be met safely and sustainably. Placement with parents is a lawful option for children subject to care orders where this is consistent with the child's welfare.

The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 and associated statutory guidance provide the framework for how these decisions must be authorised, assessed, reviewed, and overseen. These regulations ensure that children who return home from care remain subject to appropriate planning, statutory visits, and independent review, and that decisions are clearly recorded, reviewed, and accountable.

Pathways home also operate within the wider safeguarding framework set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026, which places duties on all agencies to work collaboratively to help, support, and protect children. The principles of Working Together apply throughout the pathway, including effective information sharing, multiagency planning, and shared responsibility for outcomes. Safeguarding partners retain collective responsibility for responding to risk and supporting children as circumstances change.

Pathway home planning must always reflect the child's legal status. Where a child ceases to be looked after, including following the withdrawal of consent under Section 20, the Local Authority no longer holds the same statutory powers but continues to have safeguarding responsibilities, and must act proportionately where concerns remain.

Overall accountability for the lawful and effective discharge of these statutory duties' rests with Telford & Wrekin Council as corporate parent. The Director of Children's Services holds senior professional accountability, supported by political oversight from the Lead Member for Children's Services. All Pathway home practice must operate within this statutory framework, ensuring that children return home only where this is safe, evidence-based, and capable of being sustained over time.

3 PRACTICE PRINCIPLES

Pathway home practice in Telford and Wrekin is underpinned by the Families First Strategy, Pathway to Support and Valuing Care approach. Practice is consistent across the system, ensuring that families experience one shared approach regardless of whether they are receiving family help, safeguarding intervention or support following reunification.

Children achieve the best outcomes within safe, stable and supportive relationships. Practice is therefore relational, strengths-based and responsive to the child's lived experience and the wider family context.

Circles of Support are the primary mechanism through which family-led planning is developed, reviewed and sustained throughout the pathway home journey, rather than a single meeting at a fixed point.

Telford and Wrekin understand that family extends beyond parents alone and includes siblings, extended family members and other significant people within the child's life. Wherever it is safe to do so, children should be supported to maintain and strengthen those connections as part of the planning for permanence and stability.

Practice will therefore be guided by the following principles:

Child centred, rights based, and inclusive practice

Pathway home planning is centred on the child's voice, wishes, feelings, and lived experience, in line with their age and stage of development. Children, wherever possible, are actively involved in planning and supported to understand the decisions being made about their lives, so they feel listened to, respected, and taken seriously. Practice must recognise, protect and promote each child's identity, culture, abilities, communication needs, and individual characteristics which may shape how they experience family life and change.

This includes understanding what a child can tolerate, process, and manage on a day-to-day basis, particularly for children with special educational needs or disabilities. Assessments and plans must reflect these realities, so children are supported in ways that are realistic, compassionate, and responsive within daily family life.

Family led and relational working

Pathway home planning is most effective when families are actively involved in shaping plans for their children. Practitioners must work in partnership with parents and significant caregivers, ensuring their views, strengths, and support needs are reflected within assessment and planning.

This approach is grounded in Telford and Wrekin's Valuing Care Approach, which supports practitioners and professionals to develop a shared understanding of each child and family's needs, and the collective capacity within wider family members and trusted individuals to meet those needs. Clear, respectful, and supportive challenge is a core part of this work and is used to help families make and sustain change, while keeping the child's safety and wellbeing central.

Circle of Support Meetings (Family Group Decision Making Meetings)

A Circle of Support Meeting should be used to identify strengths within wider family members and other people important to the child, and to explore whether safe pathways home or alternative family-based arrangements can be supported. These meetings play a key role in co-designing plans and workable contingencies in the child's and family's best interests. A Circle of Support should be convened early and then the benefit of additional meetings continually revisited throughout the child's journey.

Circle of Support Practitioners will build respectful, trusting relationships with families, working alongside them to understand family history, relational patterns, and interactional dynamics. This relational approach recognises and builds upon family strengths, supporting families to co-create and sustain safe, stable change and safe care for the child.

Trauma and attachment aware practice

Practitioners recognise that experiences of harm, separation, loss, adversity, and uncertainty can significantly shape how children and parents think, feel, and respond during a pathway home. Practice will be calm, respectful, and emotionally attuned, supporting safety, emotional regulation, and repair while maintaining a clear focus on the child's lived experiences, wellbeing, and long-term stability.

Planning and support must take account of how trauma, loss, and attachment experiences affect family relationships and everyday functioning, ensuring expectations are realistic, and support is proportionate to the child's and family's needs.

Evidence based and reflective decision making

Pathway home decisions must be informed by clear, balanced, and up to date evidence about the child's safety and wellbeing, and the parents' or family's capacity to meet the child's needs now, and in the future. Practitioners will work openly with families to explore strengths, vulnerabilities, and any areas of concern, supporting access to aid them to reduce or mitigate risk wherever possible.

Where needs or risks cannot be fully addressed, practitioners must provide clear, evidence-based explanation for decisions, using recognised tools and approaches, including Valuing Care profiles, alongside our core local practice principles. This ensures transparency, shared understanding, and clarity about how decisions have been reached and what they mean for the child or young person over time.

4 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Allocated Social Worker to the child

The allocated Social Worker for the child holds primary responsibility for all statutory duties throughout the pathway home process. This includes completing the pre-screening assessment and planning necessary to fully understand the child's needs. The Social Worker is tasked with assessing harm and strengths within the child's environment and conducting direct work with the child, parents, and wider family members and trusted individuals to gather and represent their views.

Additionally, the Social Worker is responsible for carrying out all statutory visits, as well as completing associated tasks and referrals to progress the child's plan. At every stage, the child's safety, wellbeing, and lived experience must remain central to all decisions and planning.

The Social Worker will chair care planning meetings and actively contribute to all meetings required to support the child's pathway home, ensuring that plans are regularly evaluated, progress is closely monitored, and the child's voice is clearly and consistently represented. They also play a key role in coordinating multi-agency involvement, ensuring that all agencies collaborate effectively to deliver consistent, timely, and well aligned support for the child and their family.

A key part of the Allocated Social Worker's role is to ensure that foster carers, as core members of the team around the child, receive timely, proportionate, and appropriate information to enable them to care safely and confidently during a pathway home. This may include sharing relevant updates about parental progress, assessments, or risk factors, where consent is in place and where the information is necessary for the foster carer to fulfil their role. The Social Worker ensures that foster carers understand the rationale for the pathway home, any changes in parental circumstances, and any expectations placed on them within the plan. Where concerns or anxieties arise, the Social Worker works jointly with the supervising social worker to offer clarity, reassurance, and a shared understanding of the child's needs.

Pathway Home Practitioner/Social Worker:

The Pathway Home Practitioner provides targeted, relational, and strengths-based support to children and families where a pathway home with parents or extended family is being considered, planned, or is taking place. Working alongside the allocated Social Worker, the Practitioner's role is to build positive, trusting relationships with parents and carers, supporting them to feel heard, understood, and actively engaged throughout the process.

The role involves working systemically with parents, children, and professionals to explore family strengths, address areas of difficulty, and prepare families for safe, sustainable pathways home. The Pathway Home Practitioner supports understanding of relational dynamics, patterns of interaction, and barriers to change within the family. The practitioner can also contribute to multi-agency planning and coordination to support smooth transitions and to ensure that support remains aligned with promoting and sustaining stability.

A key part of the role is supporting the repair of relationships between parents and the Local Authority where these have broken down. The practitioner supports clear and constructive communication between parents and professionals, helps parents take part meaningfully in meetings, and supports shared understanding of expectations, decisions, and next steps, keeping the child's needs and long-term wellbeing central. The practitioner will also offer appropriate, respectful challenge to professionals where necessary, to support timely progression of pathway home planning and ensure that agreed actions remain focused on the child's best interests.

This support is responsive and needs led, meaning the Pathway Home Practitioner will not work with every parent involved in the process. They may also become involved before a pathway home is formally considered, where repairing relational trust is necessary to support planning, cooperation, and future stability.

Family Solutions:

Family Solutions provides targeted support for both before and after pathways home to strengthen stability, enhance family capacity and ensure that children, young people and their carers are supported through periods of transition. The allocated Social Worker to the child will complete the referral to the Family Solutions team.

Following the acceptance of a referral, a consultation will take place to identify areas of strength and areas requiring further development.

This will be followed by an initial multi-agency Change in Support meeting, chaired by the Family Solutions Team Manager, to agree the multi-agency response, identified actions to progress, as well as areas of strength and needs.

Where ongoing or intensive help is needed, a Family Solutions Practitioner may be allocated to work alongside the young person, their parents or carers, and the placement. The frequency of visiting will be tailored to the individual needs of the child and family, with progress reviewed regularly as part of the Change in Support planning meetings to ensure that support remains responsive, purposeful and aligned to sustain the pathway home.

Parent Support Practitioner:

The Parent Support Practitioner provides practical, relational and strengths based support to parents and carers, working alongside them to build confidence, capacity and meaningful engagement with services. The role focuses on developing and sustaining positive change within families by strengthening protective factors, enhancing parental ability to meet their child's needs, and contributing to improved outcomes for children through collaborative and respectful practice.

Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO):

The Independent Reviewing Officer provides independent oversight and scrutiny of the child's care plan, ensuring that pathway home planning is robust, child centred and aligned with the child's safety, wellbeing and long-term stability. The IRO chairs Children in Care Reviews and is responsible for monitoring progress, preventing drift and delay, and ensuring that all voices are heard and the rights and best interests of all those involved are central to all decision making.

As part of the pathway home process, the IRO reviews and ratifies decisions, ensuring that the evidence, assessment and planning demonstrate that returning home is safe, sustainable, and in the child's best interests. The IRO works alongside the child, parents, carers and professionals to make sure that multi-agency contributions are well coordinated, that harms and strengths are clearly understood, and that the plan promotes continuity, belonging and positive outcomes.

Where concerns arise about the quality or timeliness of planning, the IRO will use their statutory escalation processes to resolve issues promptly and ensure that decisions remain transparent, accountable and focused on the child's long-term wellbeing, ensuring that decision-making reflects the interaction between harm, relationships and support.

Circles of Support (FGDM):

Circles of Support provide a family led, independent, strength based forum, bringing together the wider family and significant people in their lives, to plan for safety, stability and support at the earliest opportunity. This complements professional involvement and helps families identify practical solutions that prevent escalation or the need for accommodation. Meetings may be led by any professional who knows the family best, including Social Workers, Family Solutions Practitioners, Health Visitors, Teachers or other key partners, ensuring accessibility, flexibility and timely support.

Supervising Social Worker (SSW):

The Supervising Social Worker supports foster carers to engage with pathways home in a confident, informed and child centred way. They help foster carers understand the purpose, progress, and rationale for the pathway home plan, including any significant changes in parents' circumstances since the child came into care. This includes ensuring carers receive timely, proportionate and appropriate information (in line with consent and data sharing principles) about parental progress, reduction in harm, and the expectations placed upon them within the pathway home plan. The SSW provides reflective supervision that helps carers process the emotional impact of the return home, particularly where the child has experienced significant harm before entering care and supports them to remain focused on the child's safety, wellbeing and emotional stability throughout the transition. They work in partnership with the child's social worker, parents, and wider professionals, ensuring that foster carers feel valued, informed and supported as part of the team around the child.

Foster Carer:

Foster carers play a vital role in supporting a child through their pathway home by continuing to provide stability, emotional security, and consistent care while the plan is progressing. They help the child make sense of the process in a way that is calm, age appropriate, and reassuring, and they share detailed insight into the child's routines, needs, progress, and presentation to inform planning. Foster carers contribute to transition arrangements such as shared routines, family time and gradual increases in time with parents, and they work collaboratively with professionals and parents to promote a positive, supportive, and child centred experience.

As key members of the team around the child, foster carers should receive the information they reasonably need to fulfil their role safely and confidently, including relevant updates about parental progress, risk management and the expectations placed upon them within the pathway home plan. Their ongoing care, communication and emotional attunement help the child experience their pathway home as predictable, supported and safe.

Team Manager:

The Team Manager plays a key role by providing oversight and leadership in pathway home planning and interventions. They are responsible for ensuring that work with the child and family remains purposeful, timely, and aligned to the child's plan. This includes providing reflective supervision and management oversight to social workers and other practitioners, supporting high-quality assessment, analysis, and planning. The manager ensures that pathway home activity progresses in a way that is child-centred, strengths-based, and informed by the child's lived experience. They ensure that returning home is consistently considered during supervision, guiding social workers to ensure it remains part of the ongoing dialogue with families and the child. Moreover, the team manager promotes a systemic approach to practice, to support effective partnership working with parents, carers, and partner agencies, and ensures that plans are reviewed with appropriate pace so that children and families receive the right support at the right time.

They also play a vital role in assuring the quality of practice, supporting clear decision-making, identifying and addressing drift, and ensuring that reunification planning is supported by effective oversight, professional curiosity, and coordinated multi-agency work.

Personal Advisor:

For young people aged 16 and above, the Personal Adviser, in accordance with their level of involvement (at least quarterly visits for 16–17 year olds and at least 8 weekly visits for 17–18 year olds), has a supportive role within pathway home planning. The Personal Adviser works collaboratively with the lead social worker and the wider professional network to support a planned and well-coordinated transition for the young person.

The Personal Adviser contributes to the agreed pathway home plan and may support the young person to identify any practical, emotional, or relational needs linked to their transition towards adulthood. This includes contributing to the key areas of the pathway plan, which ensures that the support offered reflects the young person's developmental needs and goals for increasing independence.

Partner Agencies:

Partner agencies (e.g., Health, CAMHS, Education/SEND, Housing, STARS, DAP): provide targeted, specialist support that contributes directly to meeting the child's and family's wider needs. This includes services who are actively involved, such as Health, CAMHS, Education and SEND teams, housing, substance misuse services, and other relevant professionals involved with the family.

They are expected to actively contribute to assessments, planning and review processes, offering their professional insight to help build a clear, holistic understanding of strengths, harms and support needs. Their input forms an essential part of multi-agency decision-making and ensures that plans are informed by the full range of expertise surrounding the child.

Partner agencies work collaboratively with Children's Services to deliver timely, coordinated interventions that align with the goals of safe, sustainable reunification and strengthen the overall support available to the child and their family.

Parenting Assessment Team:

The Parenting Assessment Team supports reunification planning through assessment, formulation, and specialist input. The team comprises Social Workers, Family Safeguarding Practitioners, a Psychologist and an Assistant Psychologist. Where appropriate, practitioners who have previously worked with the family may contribute to updated assessments in order to promote continuity, build on established relationships, and draw on strengths and learning identified through earlier work. Where therapeutic needs have been identified through court proceedings, and with the parents' consent, the Parenting Assessment Team Psychologist may support pathway home planning through an updated formulation or review of relevant health records.

5 PATHWAY HOME ASSESSMENT, DECISION MAKING AND TRANSITION PLANNING

The pathway home process ensures that decisions about children returning home are timely, evidence-informed and based on a clear and shared understanding of harm, strengths, relationships and support around the child.

At each stage, the assessment is reviewed in response to changes in risk, family capacity and the child's lived experience. Returning home is a dynamic and non-linear process, requiring ongoing reflection, adaptation and coordinated support.

The pathway is delivered through the Change in Support process, as detailed within the Pathway to Support. This ensures continuity as children move between care, safeguarding and family help, with consistent planning, language and oversight.

Decision making must be explicit, recorded and shared, ensuring clarity for families and professionals regarding expectations, timescales and next steps.

5.1 Pre-screen (within 10 working days of identification)

Returning home may be identified as a potential permanence pathway by the Social Worker, parent or carer, the child or young person, or through professional oversight such as the Independent Reviewing Officer. Where a pathway home opportunity is identified, the Social Worker is responsible for progressing the assessment using the pathway home pre-Screen Tool within 10 working days. The purpose of the Pre Screen Tool is to consider whether a pathway home may be a viable and safe option at that stage and to identify whether further assessment and planning should begin. Wherever possible, this should be completed collaboratively with the family, ensuring that the assessment reflects their strengths, views, progress and support needs.

The Pathway Home Pre Screen Tool will consider how the parent or family member is participating in the pathway home process, recognising that commitment can be demonstrated in different ways depending on individual strengths, circumstances, and support needs. It will also consider the quality of family time, strengths within the wider family and their support system, and any immediate safeguarding concerns. The Pathway Home pre screen tool may be completed at any point during the child or young person's journey in care where a pathway home may be appropriate to explore.

To ensure that planning remains responsive to a child's change in circumstances, the Pathway home pre screen tool should be reviewed and completed at least once every 12 months. Wherever possible, this should be undertaken collaboratively with the child's parents, carers, and wider family, so that it reflects the family's current circumstances, progress, and strengths.

The Pathway home pre-screen tool is only triggered when returning home is identified as a potential permanence option and is being actively explored. It is not automatically completed for every child or young person in care.

Following completion of the Pathway Home pre-screen tool, a decision will be made about whether it is appropriate to progress to an initial pathway home meeting. The outcome of the pre-screen may indicate that a pathway home would not be safe or in the child's best interests at that time. Where this is the case, the pathway home pre-screen tool should identify the support needs, interventions, or changes required for a pathway home to be a possibility in the future, and these should be implemented as part of ongoing planning. Consideration should also be given for a referral to Changing futures or signposting to [what's on](#) for access to the local offer.

Where a pathway home appears potentially appropriate, but further preparatory work is required, clear actions and timescales will be agreed to support the family's progression towards assessment. This ensures that any next steps are purposeful, proportionate, and focused on strengthening the conditions needed for the child or young person to return home safely.

The pre-screen must clearly conclude whether:

- 'Pathway Home is not currently safe';
- 'Pathway Home may be viable with further work'; or
- 'Pathway Home should progress to planning and assessment'.

5.2 Referral for Initial Change in Support Consultation Meeting (within five working days of completed pre-screen)

Where the pathway home pre-screen tool identifies that a child returning home should be explored further, a family solutions referral should be made for an initial Change in Support Consultation by the allocated Social Worker for the child. This meeting will usually be attended by the allocated Social Worker; the social work Team Manager (if required); the Family Solutions Team Manager and the Pathway Home Practitioner (where involvement is appropriate). Should you only require the support of the Pathway Home Practitioner at that time, a request can be made through the pathway home referral form. If you are unsure about when to request the support of the Pathway Home Practitioner, please review the one-minute guide within the appendix.

The purpose of the meeting is to review the information gathered through the pre-screen, identify the strengths within the family, the progress already achieved, and to consider any barriers that may prevent a child from returning home safely. Professionals will work collaboratively to identify relational and practical solutions within the family and support that can be provided through the professionals involved.

Where appropriate, indicative timescales will be discussed. An early Change in Support plan will begin through a coordinated multi-agency approach. The meeting will agree next steps in planning. This will usually include an assessment plan, identification of the professionals involved, and an agreed review point to monitor progress. Consent for appropriate information sharing will also be confirmed where required.

Where a pathway home is being considered, foster carers and the fostering team should be involved at the earliest opportunity, ensuring that planning is transparent, child-centred, and supported across the wider system around the child. Their involvement helps reduce uncertainty, strengthen shared understanding of the plan, and support a more joined-up transition for the child and family.

Foster carers and the supervising social worker should, where appropriate, be invited to relevant planning and professional meetings. Their attendance should be purposeful, focused on supporting the child's emotional wellbeing, continuity of care, and practical planning requirements for the child to return home.

Foster carers and the fostering team should receive timely, proportionate, and relevant information to enable them to support the child and contribute meaningfully to pathway home planning. This may include, where appropriate and in line with consent, confidentiality, and information-sharing requirements, relevant updates about parental progress, changes in circumstances, the child's needs, and the expectations within the pathway home plan.

5.3 Circle of Support Meeting (FGDM)

Where a pathway home is being actively considered, the child's Social Worker will make a Circle of Support referral via the Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) referral form within five working days of the Family Solutions initial meeting, or sooner where this is required to support timely planning. The purpose of this meeting is to bring together the child's wider family and significant people in their lives to explore how they can support safe and sustainable pathways home. This reflects Telford and Wrekin's commitment to working with families and recognising the important role that extended family and significant relationships can play in supporting stability.

Circles of Support should be used as the primary forum for co-producing plans with families and not solely as a referral point within the pathway.

5.4 Pathway Home assessment and intervention (up to 45 working days)

Where the initial Change in Support consultation meeting identifies that returning home may be viable, a pathway home assessment will be completed within 45 working days. The purpose of this phase of assessment is to determine whether returning home is safe, sustainable and achievable within the child's timescales. The pathway home assessment will be informed by the [NSPCC Reunification Framework](#) and will consider evidence of sustained change within relationships, routines and parenting behaviours over time, the sustainability of improvements in parenting, and the reliability of family support, considering how support systems respond under stress or challenge.

The pathway home assessment should include active intervention to test progress and understand how well support is working in everyday circumstances. This may involve enhanced or increased family time, opportunities to observe parenting across a range of situations, and direct work with parents, carers, or the child. Therapeutic input can also be provided where appropriate, helping to build insight into the child's experiences, needs, and views.

In addition, both the child and the parent or family member should have an updated Valuing Care profile completed, which will support the tailoring of appropriate support and intervention for individualised pathways home.

Where the pathway home assessment does not recommend returning home at the point of completion, it may still identify increased family time, support services, or interventions that would benefit the child, parents, or wider family to working towards this in the longer term. These actions should be implemented as part of the child's care plan to strengthen the family's capacity and help create conditions that may support a successful pathway home in the future.

Where the pathway home assessment indicates that returning home is appropriate, transition planning will begin via Change in Support planning. This will usually involve a gradual increase in family time, tailored to the child's needs, age, and circumstances. The pace and structure of the transition will be designed to support the child's emotional safety, stability, and readiness as they move towards returning home.

5.5 Change in Support Planning Meeting (within five working days of positive assessment)

Where a pathway home assessment recommends that a child can return home, a Change in Support planning meeting will be held (within five working days) to develop and agree the transition plan. This meeting will involve the multi-agency professionals working with the child and family, which may include the Allocated Social Worker, Virtual School, Family Solutions Manager, Supervising Social Worker or Placement Team, Family Time Team, and any other key professionals involved with the child or family, ensuring clarity of roles, relationships, and expectations across the family and professionals involved.

As a Change in Support plan progresses, family members, foster carers, and the young person, where appropriate, will also be invited to contribute to planning and preparation for the return home. The Change in Support planning meeting will be recorded as part of the care planning process and will bring together the views of all individuals surrounding the child. This approach ensures that there is a shared multi-agency understanding of the child's needs and the support required to maintain stability following the return home. Following the initial Change in Support meeting, further meetings may take place depending on the level of need, with additional participants invited as the planned return home date approaches.

5.6 Placement with parents assessment, transition and move home, support and stability plan

Terminology Note:

Within this policy, the term stability plan replaces the previously used term safety plan. Any references in other documents to a "safety plan" should now be understood as a "stability plan".

A placement with parents (PWP) assessment must be completed before a child returns home. This assessment must be presented to the Permanence Panel for ratification by the Head of Service and authorised by the Director of Children's Safeguarding and Family Support. A Child in Care Review must also take place before the transition begins, to formally approve the pathway home plan and to ensure appropriate safeguards and support arrangements are in place.

The PWP assessment must clearly outline whether the child will be engaging in limited overnight family time only, or whether the plan includes progression from overnight stays to a full time return home.

Pathway home decisions must be informed by multi-disciplinary assessment, reflective discussion, and ongoing professional oversight – recognising that children's circumstances and potential sources of harm can change over time. The allocated social worker, alongside partner agencies and managers, must ensure that the child returning home is appropriate and achievable within the child's timescales, drawing on shared professional judgement and evidence based analysis. The decision to return a child to family care, and the rationale for this decision, must be explicitly recorded within the care planning process, with plans kept under regular review, so they remain responsive to change.

A transition plan, developed during Change in Support meetings, must specify the timeframe and stages of transition. In addition, the Allocated Social Worker for the child, working collaboratively with all professionals involved with the child and family, must contribute to both a support and stability plan. Together, these documents must set out:

- the roles and responsibilities of all professionals involved;
- the expectations of family members and the wider support available to them; and
- the agreed arrangements required to promote and maintain a safe and stable reunification.

A further Child in Care Review must take place within 20 working days of the child returning home. This review will evaluate the child's experience of the transition, assess progress against the agreed support and stability plan, and determine the ongoing support required to ensure the placement at home remains stable.

The support and stability plan must be shared with all professionals working with the child and family to ensure a coordinated and consistent approach throughout the pathway home process.

5.7 Continuation of change in support process

Following the child's return home, the Change in Support planning process will continue to support the stability of the pathway home arrangements and ensure that agreed support remains effective.

A Change in Support planning meeting will be held within five working days of the child returning home. This meeting will review the transition, consider the child's experience of returning home, and confirm that the agreed support and stability plan is being implemented as intended. It will also provide an opportunity for the family and professionals to identify any emerging needs and agree any additional support required.

A further Change in Support planning meeting will be held approximately four weeks after the Child in Care Review. This meeting will review the ongoing stability of the return home, reflect on progress since the child's return home, and consider whether the existing support arrangements remain appropriate.

Where the child's return home is stable and planned support is functioning effectively, the multi-agency group may agree that Change in Support planning can move towards closure. Where further needs are identified, additional Change in Support meetings may be agreed to ensure that appropriate support remains in place for the child and family.

Where a PWP becomes fragile, the allocated Social Worker must discuss this with their Team Manager and consider escalation to the 'Placement Stability Panel.' This is to provide Head of Service oversight, strengthen planning, identify further support needs, and monitor the PWP to promote stability, avoid drift, and consider contingency planning if required to promote stability around the child and family.

Where safeguarding concerns arise during a placement with parents, these must be responded in line with statutory safeguarding procedures. Consideration should be given to whether a strategy discussion is required and whether enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 should be initiated. Where concerns indicate immediate or escalating harm, legal advice should be sought without delay.

Where a placement with parents can no longer be safely maintained, the Local Authority must make alternative arrangements to safeguard the child. Wherever it is reasonably practicable, the parent(s) should be given at least seven days' written notice of the Local Authority's intention to terminate the placement.

Decisions regarding the continuation or closure of the Change in Support process will be made by the multi-agency group, considering the child's wellbeing, stability within the home, and the effectiveness of the support around the child and family following the return home.

5.8 Planned placement with parents following final care orders

Where care proceedings conclude and the plan for the child is to live with a parent whilst remaining subject to a care order, this must be managed as a placement with parents in accordance with section 22C(2) of the Children Act 1989 and regulations 15 to 20 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010. Whilst the child is living at home under a care order, the child remains looked after and all looked after child duties continue, including care planning, statutory visiting, review arrangements, and the provision of support and services to the parent, as recorded in the child's care plan.

In Telford and Wrekin, where proceedings conclude with a placement with parents' arrangement, case responsibility will remain with the Family Safeguarding Team unless an agreed transfer point is reached or the care order is discharged under section 39 of the Children Act 1989. This approach provides continuity of relationships and decision making, avoids the disruption of a team transfer, and maintains a single, coherent care plan, overseen by practitioners who know the child's history and current plan. It also preserves established multi-agency links. During this period, practice must continue in line with the pathway home policy, including the pathway home assessment, the stability and support plan, ensuring that support is purposeful, clearly recorded, and responsive to the child's lived experience and the family's changing needs.

6 VISITING STANDARDS AND REVIEW FREQUENCIES

These standards outline the minimum expectations for visiting and professional oversight during pathway home assessment, transition, and following the child's return home. Visiting arrangements may be increased based on assessed need and professional judgement. Regular visits support professionals to assess safety, monitor the child's wellbeing, and provide practical support to families during the pathway home process. An announced visit forms an important part of the oversight and health professionals to understand the child's day to day experiences within the home environment.

6.1 Before return (during assessment and transition)

Allocated Social Worker to the child visits

The Allocated Social Worker will complete visits as required to fulfil the pathway home assessment process and to monitor the child's safety, wellbeing, and progress during the transition period.

Pathway Home Practitioner

The Pathway Home Practitioner will visit as required to support the child and family during the reunification process. The frequency and purpose of these visits will be agreed in consultation with the allocated Social Worker and reviewed within the Change in Support meetings in line with the family's needs. As the Pathway Home Practitioner will not be actively involved in every child's reunification, this will vary accordingly.

Family Solutions

Family Solutions will visit at a frequency agreed through consultation and Change in Support planning. This will be reviewed regularly alongside the wider multi-agency support plan and is likely to be between one and three visits per week, depending on assessed needs and professional judgement.

Unannounced visits

At least one unannounced visit should take place during the transition period where the child is staying overnight, to support monitoring of the child's day-to-day experience in the home.

6.2 After return home

Following the child's return home, all visits undertaken must be recorded on the child's case record in line with Telford & Wrekin recording policy. Records should clearly reflect the purpose of the visit, observations of the child's wellbeing, and any progress or concerns identified in relation to the pathway home plan. Visits should explore the child's lived experience, family interactions and relational dynamics, and the functioning and effectiveness of the wider support. Any emerging harms, changes in circumstances, or additional support needs identified through visits should be shared with the multi-agency team and considered within Change in Support meetings and care planning discussions.

Where visits indicate that the return home may be becoming unstable, professionals should consider whether additional support, increased visiting, or further assessment is required to safeguard the child and support the family.

Weeks one to four

- The Allocated Social Worker will visit at least weekly, including one unannounced visit during this period.
- The Pathway Home Practitioner will undertake direct work with the family, where involved, at a frequency agreed with the allocated Social Worker and reviewed through Change in Support meetings.
- Family Solutions will continue to provide support at the frequency agreed within the Change in Support planning process.

Weeks five to 12

- The Allocated Social Worker will continue to visit weekly until week seven, after which visits will fall in line with statutory placement with parents visiting schedules. Visits must include both announced and unannounced visits.
- The Pathway Home Practitioner may continue to work with the child and family, where required, to support stability, with the frequency of involvement agreed with the allocated Social Worker and reviewed through Change in Support meetings.
- Family Solutions will continue to provide support in line with the agreed Change in Support plan.

Visiting arrangements will remain responsive to the child's needs and the stability of the return home and may be increased where concerns arise, or additional support is required.

6.3 Reviews, personal education plans, and care planning

The child will continue to have quarterly personal education plan reviews, six-monthly child in care reviews, and care planning meetings approximately every four to six weeks, dependent on the child's needs and circumstances, bringing together multi-agency perspectives to understand how the system is functioning around the child. Where Family Solutions remain involved, Change in Support meetings and care planning meetings may be combined and recorded as a care planning meeting on the child's record to avoid duplication and ensure coordinated multi-agency planning.

Where required to review progress and respond to needs, this approach will support timely decision making. Where harms cannot be safely mitigated or the stability of the reunification becomes uncertain, the case should be reviewed through the Legal Gateway process to consider whether further legal advice or intervention is required.

6.4 Revocation of Care Order

Consideration of revoking a Care Order will usually begin around six months after the child has returned home, provided there is sufficient evidence of stability, progress against the reunification plan, and positive professional judgement. However, earlier, or later consideration may be appropriate depending on the child's circumstances, the stability of the home environment, and any legal advice received.

The process typically begins with an updated placement with parents assessment, followed by a child in care review to formally agree the plan to progress toward discharge. Once this has been ratified, a referral to

Legal Gateway can be made. Where reunification remains stable and the support plan is progressing well, professionals may begin preparing the necessary documentation for an application to the court. In many cases, it is appropriate to begin this preparation around nine months after the child's return home, allowing sufficient time to evidence sustained stability.

Decisions regarding the revocation of a Care Order should be informed through ongoing care planning meetings, Child in Care Reviews, and multi-agency discussions. At every stage, the child's safety, wellbeing, and long term stability must remain central. legal advice should be sought through the Legal Gateway process as required.

6.5 Post-pathway home support

Following the discharge of the Care Order, the family will continue to receive short-term Section 17 Child in Need support for approximately three to six months, depending on their level of assessed need. This will be delivered by the Child in Care Team to maintain continuity. If longer term support is required beyond six months, the case will be transferred to Telford & Wrekin's Family Hub Practitioners. It should be recognised that Section 17 support is provided on a voluntary, consent based basis. Once parental responsibility rests fully with the parent(s), they may choose not to consent to Section 17 support, including services that have been identified or offered as part of pathway home planning.

As part of the local offer, at the point of closure the Allocated Social Worker may arrange a joint visit with the Family Hub Practitioner. This visit provides an opportunity to share information about the Family Hub offer, ensuring the family knows how to access support in the future should they need it, ensuring continued connection to supportive relationships and community resources.

Telford Family Hubs

Telford Family Hubs provide a broad range of welcoming, community-based groups and drop-ins supporting families from pregnancy through to the teenage years. These sessions offer a friendly and inclusive space where parents, carers, babies, children, and young people can connect, learn, and access support. The offer focuses on:

- early help;
- emotional wellbeing;
- development; and
- inclusive community support.

Family Hub drop-ins run throughout the week in various locations across Telford, offering one-to-one advice without the need for an appointment. Support covers a wide range of topics including:

- parenting and behaviour;
- SEND;
- domestic abuse;
- online and community safety;
- financial guidance;
- infant feeding; and
- mental health and wellbeing.

Some sessions also include themed discussions, guest speakers, and peer-led support, helping families feel heard and connected within their community.

Additional or intensive support

Where families require more intensive or targeted support, this can be assessed and delivered through Family Hubs. Support may include:

- parenting programmes;
- CAMHS or other therapeutic interventions;
- education and school-based support;
- financial assessments and practical assistance;
- housing or tenancy support;
- targeted youth support; and
- peer support groups.

If further stabilisation support is needed, a referral can be made to Family Solutions. A consultation will take place to identify a short-term, targeted package of intervention to help stabilise the family situation and prevent escalation. Therapeutic support may also be provided by the Parenting Support Practitioner or the Systemic Team as appropriate.

Peer support model

A peer support model – developed with parents who have lived experience of pathways home – is being explored. This aims to offer families opportunities for shared learning, encouragement, and practical support from others who have navigated similar journeys.

7 UNPLANNED PLACEMENT WITH PARENTS

In some circumstances, a child who is looked after by the Local Authority may return to the care of their parent(s) without the full pathway home pathway having been completed in advance. This may occur where:

- a child returns home unexpectedly or refuses to remain in their placement;
- parents resume care during a Section 20 arrangement;
- a placement breaks down and the child returns to the care of their parent(s);
- a decision is made that the child should return home urgently in the child's best interests.

Where a parent withdraws consent for a child to be accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989, the Local Authority no longer has the legal basis to complete a pathway home assessment or a placement with parents assessment. In these circumstances, the child will cease to be a looked after child.

Where concerns remain regarding the child's safety or welfare following the withdrawal of consent, the child will continue to be supported by the Children's Safeguarding and Family Support Team.

Where a child returns home in this way, the Local Authority remains responsible for taking reasonable steps to safeguard and promote the child's welfare in accordance with the Children Act 1989 and relevant statutory guidance.

Where a child returns home, or an unplanned placement with parents is being considered, and the child has previously been living in a placement where a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) is in place, practitioners must ensure that the Special Guardian, as a holder of parental responsibility, is appropriately involved in care planning and decision making. This includes sharing relevant information, seeking their views, and considering the impact of the child's return home on existing arrangements. Involvement must be proportionate, child focused, and consistent with the child's welfare, legal status, and current care plan.

Unplanned placements with parents should only occur in exceptional circumstances where an immediate return home is justified and consistent with the child's welfare. Where this occurs, the Local Authority must ensure that:

- potential harm is assessed promptly;
- appropriate safeguards and support are identified;
- the child's circumstances are reviewed through the appropriate statutory processes.

7.1 Principles for decision making in unplanned returns home

Where a child returns home unexpectedly, or an immediate placement with parents is being considered, decision making must remain child centred, proportionate, and informed by professional judgement. Practitioners should seek to understand the relational and systemic circumstances that led to the unplanned return.

Practitioners must ensure that:

- the child's welfare is the paramount consideration;
- decisions are based on the best information available at the time;

- the Local Authority continues to meet its duties as corporate parent;
- appropriate management oversight and authorisation are secured; and
- the situation is reviewed promptly through assessment, statutory visiting, and the looked after child review process.

Where a child has returned home unexpectedly, practitioners should work with the child and family to stabilise the placement, understand the circumstances of the return, and identify what ongoing support is required.

7.2 Immediate placement with parents

Where it is necessary for a child to return home without the full planned pathway home process being completed, the placement must be treated as an Immediate Placement with Parents in accordance with the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010.

The Nominated Officer (Director of Children's Safeguarding and Family Support) may approve an immediate placement with parents where:

- exceptional circumstances justify the placement;
- the placement is consistent with the child's welfare and safety;
- reasonable consultation and checks have been undertaken.

The following actions must occur immediately (Day 0):

- nominated Officer approval must be obtained and recorded;
- a same day visit must be completed to see the parent, inspect the accommodation, and identify all household members;
- a stability plan must be put in place;
- the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) must be informed within 24 hours;
- statutory notifications must be completed before the placement or within five working days.

Before approval is granted, the Social Worker should ensure that:

- the parent or family member has been seen and spoken with and agrees to the placement;
- as much relevant assessment information as possible has been gathered;
- consideration has been given to all household members and potential safeguarding risks;
- multi-agency checks have been initiated, including initiating police, PNC, education, and health checks.

7.3 Authorisation and recording

All unplanned placements with parents must be formally recorded using the Unplanned Placement with Parents Approval Form (Appendix).

The form must include:

- the reason for the request to place the child with the parent;
- confirmation that the parent has been seen and agrees to the placement;
- information gathered to inform the initial assessment;
- confirmation that the home environment has been seen where possible; and

- evidence that relevant multiagency checks have been completed, including police, education, health, and any other relevant agencies.

The form must also include:

- Team Manager comments;
- Head of Service oversight; and
- Formal authorisation by the Nominated Officer (required on Day 0).

The rationale for the decision must be clearly recorded on the child's electronic case record.

7.4 Stability planning

Where a child returns home unexpectedly, a stability plan must be developed with the child and parent(s) to ensure the child's immediate and ongoing safety.

The stability plan should:

- identify known or potential risks;
- clarify protective actions and expectations;
- identify the support available to the family;
- include any required restrictions or safeguarding measures; and
- be clearly recorded and shared with the family and relevant professionals.;

The stability plan must be completed on the day of placement and reviewed regularly, with updates made as circumstances change.

7.5 Assessment and review requirements

Following an immediate placement with parents, the Local Authority must complete statutory assessment and review activity within prescribed timescales:

- the placement with parents assessment must be completed within 10 working days of the placement;
- a looked after child review must take place within 10 working days of the placement; and
- within 20 working days of the placement, a formal decision must be made to confirm or terminate the placement.

Following this review, a decision must be made as to whether:

- the placement with parents should be confirmed; or
- the placement should end and alternative arrangements be made to safeguard the child.

7.6 Statutory visiting

Where a child is placed with parents in these circumstances:

- social work visits must take place at least once a week for the first six weeks;
- thereafter, visits must take place at intervals of no more than six weeks.

Visits should focus on:

- the child's safety and wellbeing;
- the child's experience of living at home;
- parenting capacity and support needs; and
- progress against the Stability Plan.

7.7 Support and stabilisation

Unplanned return homes may require additional professional support to stabilise the placement. Families may be offered targeted support, which may include:

- Family Solutions intervention;
- parenting support;
- therapeutic or mental health services;
- education support;
- practical or financial assistance.

8 KEY PRACTICE CONSIDERATIONS

Throughout the pathway home process, practitioners must ensure that planning takes a holistic approach to the needs of the child and family. A successful return home depends on stability across multiple areas of the child's life, and these considerations should inform assessment, transition planning, and post pathway home support.

8.1 Identity, culture and belonging

Practitioners should consider the child's cultural identity, religion, language, and sense of belonging when planning a pathway home. Where relevant, families should be supported to maintain connections with cultural, faith, and community groups. Planning should ensure that the child's identity needs continue to be recognised and supported following their return home.

8.2 Advocacy and the child's voice

Children should be supported to express their wishes and feelings throughout the pathway home process. Where appropriate, children should be informed of their right to independent advocacy to ensure their views are heard within care planning, Change in Support meetings, and reviews.

8.3 Sibling relationships

Where children have siblings, practitioners should consider the importance of sibling relationships and contact arrangements when planning pathways home. Wherever it is safe and appropriate, efforts should be made to maintain and strengthen these relationships.

8.4 Education, stability and attendance

Pathway home planning should consider the child's education arrangements, school attendance, and continuity of learning. Practitioners should work with schools and Virtual School colleagues, where appropriate, to minimise disruption and support the child's ongoing educational progress.

8.5 Health and wellbeing

Children returning home should continue to have their health needs monitored and supported, including access to routine health appointments, dental care, and immunisations. Practitioners should also consider the child's emotional wellbeing and access to therapeutic or mental health support where this has been identified as a need.

8.6 Digital safety and access

Practitioners should consider the child's digital safety and online wellbeing, including access to devices, internet use, and parental understanding of online harms. Where appropriate, families may need guidance or support to ensure children are safe in digital environments.

8.7 Financial stability and participation

Pathway home planning must consider the family's financial context and the practical support required to enable the child to participate fully in everyday life. This includes access to transport, education resources, leisure activities, and digital equipment, supporting connection, inclusion, and opportunity within the family and community.

Where additional items or resources are required to support the child's return home, practitioners should initially work alongside families to explore community and charitable sources of support, recognising and building on existing strengths and resources. Where these avenues do not fully meet identified needs, the social worker should discuss the matter with their manager and, where appropriate, present to RAMP to consider funding in a timely and proportionate way.

A Circle of Support meeting should be used to explore how the wider family and support system can contribute to meeting practical and emotional needs, strengthening shared responsibility and sustainability within the reunification plan. Where required, additional funding streams, including pilot schemes, may complement this support.

As family time increases to 24 hours or more, families may become eligible to access financial entitlements, including Child Benefit. This does not require overnight stays. Families may also be eligible for Universal Credit as part of the Change in Support toward reunification. With parental consent, a referral to the DWP Adviser will be made to support families to access their full entitlements in a timely manner.

Where a child has returned home and there is a delay in the commencement of DWP payments, the allocated social worker may seek interim financial support via the council's Resource Allocation and Monitoring Panel (RAMP). This should be aligned to expected entitlement and time limited, ensuring continuity and stability while longer term arrangements are established.

8.8 Family and community support relationships

Successful pathways home are strengthened where families have sustainable wraparound support. Practitioners should consider the role of extended family members, friends, and community connections in providing emotional, practical, or informal support following reunification. These should be explored through Circle of Support meetings, Change in Support planning, and care planning discussions, with clear expectations agreed about how family members or trusted adults may contribute to maintaining stability.

Practitioners should also consider whether families may benefit from connections with local community resources, such as family hubs, peer support groups, youth services, or other community-based provisions. Consideration of these areas supports a holistic understanding of need and promotes long term stability and positive outcomes for children and their families.

Parenting feedback

Following the revocation of the Care Order, parents will be offered the opportunity to provide feedback on their experiences of the pathway home process. The feedback will help the service to understand what supported families effectively during a return home and identify areas where practice can continue to improve. Feedback may be gathered through a parent feedback form, a conversation with the practitioner, or other appropriate engagement methods. Where appropriate, parents may also be invited to contribute to the development of pathway home practice, including supporting peer learning or sharing experiences to benefit other families navigating the pathway home process.

9 COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK

Children and families will be provided with information about their right to advocacy, feedback, and the complaints process at all stages of the return home pathway. Children will be supported to access independent advocacy services where they wish to express their views, raise concerns, or make a complaint about decisions or their experiences of care and pathway home planning.

Parents and carers will also be informed about the Local Authority's complaints procedure, including how to raise concerns or provide feedback regarding the support and services they receive. Feedback from children and families will be welcomed as part of the service's commitment to continuous learning and improvement, helping to strengthen pathway home practice and ensure that services remain responsive to the needs of families.

10 OUTCOMES AND MEASURES OF SUCCESS

The effectiveness of pathway home practice in Telford and Wrekin will be measured through:

- stability of pathways home over time;
- reduction in re-entry to care;
- timeliness of assessment and decision making;
- the child's lived experience, including sense of safety, belonging and wellbeing;
- family confidence and ability to sustain change; and
- effectiveness of multi-agency support.

Learning from these outcomes will inform continuous improvement, quality assurance activity and service development across the Pathway to Support.

11 APPENDIX

The appendix provides practical tools and guidance to support practitioners in delivering pathway home activity. These tools are designed to promote consistent, relational, and systemic practice, supporting assessment, planning, and decision-making at each stage.

Legislation and statutory guidance (Insert)

FFP policy (Insert Hyperlink)

FGDM leaflet (Insert Hyperlink)

Kinship Local Offer (Insert Hyperlink)

Flowchart pathway home - planned (Insert)

Flowchart pathway home - unplanned (Insert)

Support and stability plan (Insert)

Unplanned Placement with parents - Nominated Officer and Head of Service approval form (Insert a copy)

Unplanned placement with parents crib sheet (Insert)

Flowchart placement stability panel pathway (insert)

Pathway Home Practitioner – one minute guide (insert)

Pathway home transition plan (Schedule 3)

This section sets out the core components of a pathway home transition plan. The plan provides a clear, structured, and gradual pathway supporting a child's move home, developed through Change in Support planning and aligned with the wider return home pathway.

Core components of the transition plan

- 1 Overview of the pathway home process** – Recorded within Change in Support meetings and reflected in the child's Care Plan.
- 2 Key strengths supporting a pathway home** – Identified through assessment and documented within Change in Support meeting minutes.
- 3 Vulnerabilities and how they will be mitigated** – Discussed within Change in Support planning and clearly recorded, ensuring all agencies understand their role in promoting safety and stability.
- 4 Trial overnight schedule (typically two to four weeks)** – Developed collaboratively and tailored to the child's needs. Examples will be added to the appendix.
- 5 Support services in place** – Recorded in the transition summary and reflected in multi-agency Change in Support planning.
- 6 Roles and responsibilities during transition** – Outlined during Change in Support meetings so all professionals, carers, and family members understand their responsibilities.
- 7 Final move date** – Agreed and recorded within Change in Support planning.
- 8 Contingency plan** – Co-produced with the family as part of Change in Support planning and uploaded to the child's record. This may also be included directly within the Transition Plan.

Transition planning guidance

A clear, child-centred and gradual transition plan will be created for every pathway home. The plan will reduce the child's time in their current placement and increase time with the parent or family member they are returning to, at a pace aligned with the child's emotional needs, safety, and readiness.

Individualised planning

Transitions are planned on an individual basis, considering:

- the child's age and developmental needs
- education arrangements
- distance and travel
- additional needs or disabilities
- the capacity of the multi-agency group to support consistency

Use of sleepovers

Sleepovers are used to gradually increase time within the family home and to support the development of daily care routines between the parent and child.

For some children, sleepovers may not be appropriate. Where this is the case, plans will be adapted in line with the child's best interests and any additional needs that may make overnight transitions difficult.

Shared plan

The transition plan will be provided to:

- the current carer
- the parent or family member
- the child, in a child-friendly visual format

Reviewing progress

Throughout the transition, Change in Support planning will provide opportunities to:

- review progress
- reflect on the child's experience
- adjust the plan where required

Example: Transition Plans

Monday 9 February	Tuesday 10 February	Wednesday 11 February	Thursday 12 February	Friday 13 February	Saturday 14 February	Sunday 15 February
	Mummy will collect me from school and go to mummy's house for tea.			Mummy will collect me from school and go to mummy's house for tea.	Go to mummy's house and spend the day with her.	
Monday 16 February	Tuesday 17 February	Wednesday 18 February	Thursday 19 February	Friday 20 February	Saturday 21 February	Sunday 22 February
	Go to mummy's house and spend the day with her.	Spending time with mummy from 12noon-6.30pm. Teatime and bath time with mummy.			Go to mummy's house and spend the day with her.	
Monday 23 February	Tuesday 24 February	Wednesday 25 February	Thursday 26 February	Friday 27 February	Saturday 28 February	Sunday 1 March
	Mummy will collect me from school and go to mummy's house for tea.			Mummy will collect me from school and go to mummy's house for tea and bath time.	Go to mummy's house and spend the day with her.	

Example: Second plan

Monday 2 March	Tuesday 3 March	Wednesday 4 March	Thursday 5 March	Friday 6 March	Saturday 7 March	Sunday 8 March
	Mummy will collect me from school and go to mummy's house for tea.	Mummy will collect me from school and go to mummy's house for tea.		Mummy will collect me from school and go to mummy's house for tea.	Go to mummy's house and spend the day with her.	
Monday 9 March	Tuesday 10 March	Wednesday 11 March	Thursday 12 March	Friday 13 March	Saturday 14 March	Sunday 15 March
	Mummy will collect me from school and go to mummy's house for tea.			Mummy will collect me from school and go to mummy's house for tea.	Go to mummy's house and spend the day with her.	Mother's day. Go to mummy's house and spend the day with her.
Monday 16 March	Tuesday 17 March	Wednesday 18 March	Thursday 19 March	Friday 20 March	Saturday 21 March	Sunday 22 March
	Mummy will collect me from school and go to mummy's house for tea.	Mummy will collect me from school and go to mummy's house for tea.		Mummy will collect me from school and go to mummy's house for tea.	Go to mummy's house and spend the day with her.	Go to mummy's house and spend the day with her.
Monday 23 March	Tuesday 24 March	Wednesday 25 March	Thursday 26 March	Friday 27 March	Saturday 28 March	Sunday 29 March
Mummy will collect me from school and go to mummy's house for tea.	Mummy will collect me from school and go to mummy's house for tea.			Mummy will collect me from school and go to mummy's house for tea.	Go to mummy's house and spend the day with her.	Go to mummy's house and spend the day with her.
Monday 30 March	Tuesday 31 March	Wednesday 1 April				
		A lives with mummy.				

Telford and Wrekin parenting offer - right help at the right time/universal services and what's on - www.telfordfamilyhubs.co.uk/parenting