

Permanency Planning Meetings Practice Guidance

In Devon we carefully consider early permanence planning, which is best practice for children who may come into our care. Permanence planning discussions are not just undertaken in a multi-agency forum, practitioners and managers discuss permanence all the time.

The 'Permanency Planning Meeting' process aims to develop a formal approach to permanency planning and can aid in smooth transitions and avoiding drift. Permanency Planning Meetings differ from the child's statutory Child in Care Review Meeting, which is the child's meeting, chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer.

Purpose

The purpose of the Permanency Planning Meeting is to:

- Develop the initial proposal for the Permanence Plan
- Develop the Permanence Plan to ensure parallel planning is in place at the earliest opportunity to prevent drift and delay.
- Develop the Permanence Plan to present to the first and subsequent statutory reviews with the plan formulated for no later than the second statutory review
- Monitor the progress of the Permanence Plan in meeting the needs of the child in relation to: Health, Education, Emotional and Behavioural Development, Identity, Family and Social Relationships, Social Presentation and Self-Care Skills.
- Provide evidence of decision making and rationale for the chosen Permanence Plan.

Recording of Permanency Planning Meetings

The discussion will be recorded on the child or young person's electronic file under Permanency Planning Meeting.

Frequency

There should be a minimum of one Permanency Planning Meeting prior to attending any Permanence Panel for the child or young person.

The Permanency Planning Meetings should take place 6 weekly once the child is in our care and are attended by the Child's Social Worker, Independent Reviewing Officer, Special Guardianship Social Worker and Adopt South West (where applicable) until the child or young person's permanence plan has been achieved.

There are lots of other times / circumstances when a Permanency Planning Meeting is needed:

- When there is consideration to escalate the child's plan to Pre-proceedings. Social Worker and Team Manager will have a Permanency Planning Meeting with the Area Manager or as soon as after where action has been taken in an emergency. We call this early permanence discussion.

- During care proceedings whenever the decision has been made to apply to the court to share parental responsibility (interim care order). The Permanency Planning Meeting is to be held no later than 6 weeks before final Care Plan is filed with the court.
- A Permanency Planning Meeting should be held within 20 working days of a decision for a child to enter care or by the first Child in Care Review, there after 6 weekly until their single track permanence plan has been endorsed and achieved.
- The plan for permanence should be reviewed and tracked by Area Manager / Team manager every 4 weeks through 1:1 supervision and Permanence Panel until permanence has been achieved.
- Where the agreed permanence plan is for the child to remain with parents, the meeting can serve to ensure necessary support is available to sustain this permanence plan.

Chairing the Permanency Planning Meeting

All Permanency Planning Meetings will be chaired by the allocated Social Worker, however for those children where there is complexity or contentious issues, consideration should be given to the meeting being chaired by the Team Manager.

Attendees

The Permanency Planning Meeting should be chaired by the Social Worker, or where required a Team Manager. The following will be invited:

Child's social worker

- Nominated practitioner from Fostering Team where fostering is a realistic permanence option
- Nominated practitioner from Adoption Team (if adoption is one of the realistic options)
- A representative from the Family and Friends Team (if placement with family/friends is one of the realistic options)
- Independent Reviewing Officer
- Children's Guardian (where care proceedings have been issued)

It is critical, any professional who might need to contribute to any of the plans attends the meeting where possible. Where the child is in local authority care, joint actions by the child's social worker and the nominated practitioner within the Fostering or Adoption Team should be agreed. The meeting will enable consultation and clarification of roles and responsibilities between workers.

The view of the child(ren) and his/her parents must be sought in advance by the social worker and reported to the meeting.

The attendees should ensure the following:

Permanence options are set out and a permanence plan is drawn up

- All those attending are clear about the actions needed to achieve the plan

- The timescales for achievement are clear
- The necessary resources are available
- A contingency plan is in place, in the event of the original plan not being successful
- Dates are set for reviewing the plan.
- When adoption is recognised as an option, there will be an immediate action for the team to initiate the ADM process.

Permanency Planning Meeting will embed the Care Planning or Pathway Plan objectives.

- To address drift, especially when a child is in our care under a Section 20 Accommodation arrangement.
- Reunification discussion is embedded in the permanency planning process and takes place within 6 weeks of the Initial Child in Care Review.
- When long term or permanent fostering is being considered.
- Where there are potential risks to the stability of a permanent placement (e.g. violence/risk of abduction/need for geographical distance) and there is a need to consider a placement stability meeting with providers/carers;
- To achieve permanence where Special Guardianship, or a Child Arrangements Order is viable.
- Where adoption is considered scrutiny of the plan will be completed prior to the request for before booking a slot for Agency Decision Maker decision.
- For children, where a Placement Order (for Adoption) has been made, there is a requirement for a further statutory review under the Adoption Agencies Regulations, 3 months and 6 months post Placement Order to consider why the child had not been placed in an adoptive placement. A Permanency Planning Meeting should be called before these review points if continuing assessment of the child indicates that Adoption may not be viable.
- When a young person is due to leave our care, the Permanency Planning Meeting should confirm the young person's care leaving status and impact on their leaving care entitlement and transition plans. This must take place before the young person's final Child in Care or Pathway Plan Review meeting.

If there are substantial changes made to a child's permanence plan a statutory review should be convened ideally within ten working days. Any agreed changes should be recorded on the Care Plan. The Independent Reviewing Officer has a responsibility to ensure Care Plans are informed by an up to date assessment.

Reviewing the Permanence Plan

The Permanence Plan should be kept under review until a final decision on permanence has been made and this plan has been achieved. Following the plan being achieved, Permanence Plan reviews should take place at least twice in a 12-month period to inform the Child in Care Reviews and should take into consideration:

- If permanence plan needs to be changed e.g. reunification, Special Guardianship Order to care giver
- Post 18 arrangements for Care Leavers

The Care Plan or Pathway Plan is then updated to reflect the Permanence Plan updates and presented at the Child in Care Review for endorsing.