



Centre for Professional Practice

## Practice Briefing Note 95

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Child Permanency Strategy, Child Permanence Meetings, Achieving Early Permanence Panels, Permanence Monitoring Panels</b>
<b>Effective From:</b>	<b>24<sup>th</sup> February 2021</b>
<b>Practice Note:</b>	<p>In November 2020, Ofsted in their assurance visit to Dudley found, ‘...<i>there is insufficient understanding, oversight and grip of permanence planning. Tracking systems are underdeveloped and do not support timely decision-making for children on their journey through permanence. This means that many children with a long-term plan for fostering are not being formally matched soon enough. This has delayed family finding and matching timeliness for a small number of children for whom the plan was adoption. The delay in introducing a special guardianship policy and support offer means that too many children remain subject to care orders</i>’.</p> <p>Further work across the Directorate Leadership Team including learning from audits, learning from data and trends from Adoption@heart, fostering panel and the Local Family Justice Board, identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Our work tends to be linear and parallel planning is not as effective as it should be, meaning that we wait for one approach to fail before we think of alternatives.</i></li><li>• <i>We can be better at involving families earlier to make better decisions for children without entering the draconian world of Family Court.</i></li><li>• <i>Our connectivity across Children’s Services can improve to ensure that a child’s journey to permanence is resolved as soon as possible and with the lowest possible form of statutory intervention.</i></li><li>• <i>Children spend years in foster placements before they are formally matched and special guardianship is not always considered as a better form of permanence.</i></li></ul> <p>This effectively means that our children spend too long in local authority care. Their sense of belonging, identity and family is insecure, and they do not have the same level of privacy as most children do. In fact, they feel different from other children. It also means that our Social Workers, Supervising Social Workers, Independent Reviewing Officers, Virtual School and other support staff’s capacity is filled with children who do not need our intervention, our time, or our investment. We recognise that some children do much better in our care, but our numbers of children in care are much too high. It is detrimental to children, to our workforce, and to our budgets that can be invested much better if fewer children are looked after by the state.</p>

	<p>To achieve early permanence, we have developed a Permanence Strategy, which has been consulted on and agreed across the Dudley Leadership Team and staff consultation sessions. From 8<sup>th</sup> February, there has been the introduction of Child Permanence Meetings. These child-level meetings are aimed to explore all options for permanence, including reunification to a parent or parents, reunification to family, care or special guardianship with family, foster care or adoption. The aim is parallel planning.</p> <p>The Achieving Early Permanence Panel will continue to monitor the progress made, but these meetings will no longer require additional paperwork. They will review the Child Permanence Plan and appropriately escalate to access additional support and prevent delay.</p> <p>The Permanence Monitoring Panel at strategic level will ensure that any themes, learning, achievements and gaps are identified and celebrated, whilst the right agencies will be held to account for any delays, and ensure appropriate senior leadership intervention when additional services are required.</p> <p>Included are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <a href="#">The Child Permanency Strategy;</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">The Terms of Reference for Child Permanence Meetings;</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">The Child Permanence Meeting Agenda (the outline report and minutes);</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">The Terms of Reference for Achieving Early Permanence Panel;</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">The Terms of Reference for Permanence Monitoring Panel;</a></li> </ul> <p><i>The outline for the report and minutes for Child Permanence Meetings are being piloted and will be appropriately adapted before we develop the form within Liquid Logic.</i></p>
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