

Permanency – Long Term Matching Panel

Terms of Reference. Version 3

Introduction

All children and young people are entitled to a sense of security, continuity, commitment, and a sense of identity. We define permanence as the securing of a child's legal, physical, social, and psychological wellbeing throughout childhood and into adulthood, achieving this by the provision of consistent care, stable relationships, and a secure family base in life.

Early permanency planning and long-term placement matching for all looked after children is essential to avoid drift and delay and to progress plans for security and attachment.

Permanence for looked after children will be achieved through several routes – return to family, adoption, special guardianship, connected person placement, child arrangement order and long term fostering. The Long Term Fostering Matching Panel will consider the long term fostering route.

Social workers and their managers should assess when is the right time for that child to be matched with their carers, depending on the child's age and circumstances.

Supervising social workers, in consultation with the child's social worker will be responsible for completing a short report which outlines the reasons why the proposed placement meets the child's long-term needs.

Scope

- Where long term fostering has been endorsed as the plan for looked after children at their statutory review, all long term fostering matches will be agreed by at the Long Term Fostering Panel meeting
- The panel will make a recommendation as to whether or not the proposed match is in the child or young person's interest
- Cases for all children under the age of 10 will be subject to a best interest decision in respect of long-term fostering, including in cases where there are siblings of different ages
- The panel will consider cases where there are particular issues/ obstacles

Purpose

- To agree/ recommend permanency as the Care Plan through permanent matching of children in long-term foster placements
- To resolve any presenting issues/obstacles and seek senior management decisions/view if required
- To escalate concerns with senior management as required, where children and young people highlight drift or difficulties that will hinder implementation of agreed plans

- To ensure that there is effective communication between the professionals/agencies involved
- To monitor and report to the Trust on the numbers of cases reviewed, outcomes, themes to enable learning and support whole system improvement

Impact

- Improved timeliness and quality of long-term fostering matching
- Reduce drift and delay for children
- Reduce the length of time to achieve permanence for children
- Improve outcomes for children

Membership

- Chair – Head of LAC and Leaving Care
- Operational Leads:
 - IRO
 - LAC
 - Fostering
 - Placements and Resources
 - Care Management
 - Virtual School
 - Looked After Health Team

Social Worker and Fostering Supervising Social Worker in relation to presenting cases

Panel Procedures

Social Workers and Fostering Supervising Social Workers will ensure case paperwork is submitted a minimum of 3 days before the panel

If the Foster Carers are approved Sandwell Foster Carers (i.e. in-house Foster Carers) the panel will need:

- Foster Carer's Annual Review minutes
- Updated medical
- Child's Permanence Report on each child
- Matching Report on each child
- Permanency Planning Meeting summary sheet
- Child's Care Plan
- PEP

Minutes will be taken at the meeting by a Panel Administrator.

Frequency

- Fortnightly (to be reviewed at 3 months)

Governance

- *To be agreed*