**Placement Stability Meeting and Actions.**

**Professional Guidance.**

**Placement Stability Expectations**

Devon County Council promotes that children should have a move only when their permanency goals require it. Moves should be progressions towards permanence, as a well matched stable placement with caring, encouraging foster carers or residential workers can provide a child in care with the foundation for achievement and increased self-esteem.

The negative impacts of unnecessary placement moves can be far reaching and damaging for the child (e.g. inability to make meaningful attachments) and for the carer (and also for the local authority) and therefore positive, proactive measures to address a placement under pressure are required.

The need to promote placement stability includes children who are in Connected Person’s placement or returned home under Placement with Parent regulations, residential placements to ensure placements are stable enough to facilitate young persons planned move on (eg to own tenancy) and Permanency via Fostering

It is essential that a multi-agency collaborative approach to problem solving is used to address risks to placement and to promote placement stability in order to ensure the child or young person has the best quality placement experience available to them as a child in care. We need to consider:

* Clear Risk Assessment and plan to address risks with detailed support services for carer and the child. This should be reviewed at the CIC Review and when there are significant changes or elevated risk to placement or breakdown.
* Regular tracking to avoid drift to maintenance.
* Increased placement choice to include and explore family in supporting the placement.
* Increased multi-agency support.
* Placement Stability Meeting as opposed to Disruption Meetings.

A Placement Stability Meeting would seek to address instability factors so that;

* Risks to the carer’s own family are assessed and managed;
* Support and advice is available to carers where there is persistent conflicting demands upon them;
* Difficulties regarding behavioural problems in school, or child or young person is at risk of exclusion, action is taken to address;
* As it is acknowledged that repeated challenging behaviour or risk taking behaviour by the child or young person (such as frequent missing episodes, aggression or self-harming) can lead to anxiety and exhaustion of the carer, that support is in place to help carers to manage;
* The age of the children, and teenagers in particular, which can place additional pressures on placements, is considered to ensure support and interventions are targeted to reduce such breakdowns;
* The impact of contact with the birth family, in light of the best interests of the child, may also be difficult for carers and their family’s, and for carers to receive support and guidance to manage,
* The relationships between the young person, carer and other children in household are understood and include whether individuals feel safe and what interventions may be required to promote safety and well-being.
* Carers who have been unable to respond appropriately to children or young people are given the support and guidance to consider the source of the problem and help to move forward.
* At times it is recognised there may be conflict with other children in placements, including carers own children, and for help to be offered to calm, mediate and assess so that conflicts are managed and addressed.
* Carers own personal circumstances are taken into consideration and workable solutions considered.
* At times when the relationship between the carer and child is strained, timely interventions re-build and strengthen relationships
* Where interventions are required in order to build individuals’ strengths, skills and experiences, there is a clear learning or support plan that clarifies the most appropriate resources to assist.

**Placement Stability Meetings**

At the Placement Planning Meeting, placement stability needs to be considered and discussed in order to inform the placement agreement and the potential for organising a Placement Stability Meeting. Placement Stability Actions should be considered at point of second placement move, all of which are monitored by the Management Information Team’s 2+/3+ placement lists and sent to Social Work and Fostering Team Managers. A Placement Stability Meeting should be immediately actioned when a placement is showing signs of breaking down. The Placement Stability Meeting should be chaired by Team Manager, Assistant Team Manager or Senior Practitioner.

Within Fostering, placement stability meetings should be convened as part of the maintenance of placements, to take place between the matching meeting and Child in Care Review if required, to promote stability and maintain the placement, and to be reviewed as/when appropriate. The Fostering Stability Meetings to be chaired by the Fostering Team Manager. In addition a Placement Stability scale is monitored within a foster carer’s monthly supervision and can highlight the need for a placement stability meeting.

* Where there is risk of imminent breakdown the stability meeting needs to take place immediately and at least within 5 working days of indications of concern.
* The Placement Stability Meeting can be called by the Child’s Social Worker, Supervising Social Worker, IRO or the Child or their Representative.

The Placement Stability Meeting should include:

* The child or young person (or their representative if more appropriate);
* The carer(s);
* The fostering supervising social worker or residential key worker
* The allocated Social Worker for the child
* The Childrens Placement Support Team

The Views should also be gained from:

* The Independent Reviewing Officer (who is to be kept informed throughout)
* The child’s parents (if appropriate)
* Virtual school lead
* CIC Designated Nurse
* Any other relevant professionals (eg Young Devon, CAMHS)
* CIC CAMHS team.

**Risk Assessment and Stability Action Planning.**

* In order to promote placement stability we consider a strength-based model that looks to support and address concerns in collaboration with the young person, carers, family and professionals involved.
* The Placement Stability Meeting will have a clear agenda and additional information from other Professionals to help the members contribute positively throughout the meeting.
* Members will be asked to share their views and ask questions about the information shared. The Chair will collate this information on Flipcharts within these strength-based categories;
* **What are we worried about?**

Harm, danger, worst case scenario, complicating factors, include a Risk assessment and Risk Management Plan if required

* **What is working well?**

Existing strengths and safety, positive relationship, developments, when it was different and went it works, connections and support

* **What needs to happen?**

Safety/stability goals, wellbeing, achievement goals, motivations, changes, support, what are the next steps

The Placement Stability actions will also evidence:

* **Sharing the views, wishes and feelings of the child or young person?**

In relation to the current issues of concern, if known, make reference to observations of younger children or any direct consultation, advocacy

* **What specific support do you think that your agency/family can provide to the child/young person or the carers?**

Try to be specific, specifies actions for the Children’s Placement Support Team who support Foster Placements, identify resources to be considered by Placement Review Panel, potential need for Family Group Conference to draw potentially in all available resources to assist the placement

* **This information is presented on the Stability Actions sheet which forms part of the Child’s Plan and the Child’s Social Worker is responsible for ensuring any actions are included in the Child’s Plan.**

**Stability Scale**

When all the necessary information has been shared and analysed, the Chair will ask all members to make a judgement about the stability of the placement and future risk. The below scaling question will be asked and all members will be expected to provide a reason for their scaling.

0 10

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No Stability Stability

* **Scaling Question**

On a scale of 0-10 where 0 is things have got so bad, there is so much conflict, anxiety and mistrust that child/YP has to leave the placement now, and 10 is we have all understood what has happened and what we need to do so we can live together into the future.

**Recording and Stability Actions**

Stability Actions will be discussed and considered throughout the meeting and any agreed outcomes, actions and timescales will be recorded at the time that they are discussed. As part of the Stability Meeting, the Chair will ensure that members have the opportunity to make additions and changes to the Stability Actions through discussion and agreement.

* The meeting minutes will be recorded on D6 meeting minutes.
* The Stability Actions will form part of the Child’s Plan and the child’s Social Worker will be responsible to ensure that the actions are clearly recorded in the Child’s Plan.
* When, despite stability actions and targeted interventions, a placement has ended abruptly or on an unplanned basis, a Disruption Meeting should be held to establish why the placement disrupted, and what lessons can be learnt about meeting a child's/young person’s future needs.