

To: All CS staff

**Gail Hancock**  
Interim Director for Children's Safeguarding and Care  
Shire Hall  
Westgate Street  
Gloucester,  
GL1 2TG  
email: [gail.hancock@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:gail.hancock@gloucestershire.gov.uk)

Please ask for: Gail Hancock

Phone: 01452 425303

Our Ref: GH/dh

Your Ref:

Date: 21 October 2020

Dear Colleagues

### **Re: Reunification Practice Guidance**

I am pleased to attach updated and refreshed local practice guidance regarding the reunification of children in care where they are returning home. Thank you to everyone who has played a part in clarifying and confirming our approach. I think this is a very helpful step forward which dovetails really well with the permanence planning project which is already underway and being led by Philip Segurola, Interim Assistant Director (Improvement).

Returning children home from care is a key decision in a child's life and must always be undertaken with due diligence to ensure that we have fully addressed historical and current risk factors to ensure the child or young person can return home safely. Failure to do so will only increase a child's exposure to trauma and impact upon their ability to make successful attachments with future carers.

Conversely, we should not have any 'open ended' permanence plans for our children in care as any necessary parental change needs to be properly assessed and tested within the time scale that is right for the child.

Our practice guidance draws on the very well-established NSPCC Reunification Framework which includes a risk classification tool and a summary of relevant evidence about the factors that impact on the success or otherwise of reunification when considering the viability of reunification with children and families.

The practice guidance sets out a five stage process with three appendices including the risk classification tool, a flow chart and a summary of the relevant evidence. Please take time to read the practice guidance and discuss this in supervision in relation to individual children for whom reunification applies. The local reunification practice guidance is attached here for ease of reference and is also uploaded onto our Tri-X procedures. Implementation is with immediate effect.

Thank you for all your continuing hard work and commitment to support vulnerable local children, young people and their families - especially following our recent Ofsted Focus Visit. We are awaiting the embargoed draft letter from Ofsted which we expect to arrive today. The senior leadership team will aim to share further information and feedback with you all in due course.

Kind regards

Gail

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**Interim Director for Children's Safeguarding & Care**