

# Children's Social Care Permanence Panel



## 1. Statement of Purpose and Function

The Permanence Panel is a forum that oversees permanence planning arrangements for BCP Children in Care (CiC), identifying actual or potential drift and delay, and setting remedial or proactive actions to ensure that permanence plans are progressed. The Permanence Panel functions alongside Legal Gateway Meetings where the progression of care plans for children in care proceedings are reviewed.

All CiC should have a plan of permanence, which can be achieved by way of reunification, kinship care or other family arrangements, special guardianship, adoption or long-term fostering.

[The Care Planning, Placement and Care Review Regulations \(2010\)](#) set out the responsibilities of social workers, their managers and Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) to ensure that all CiC have a permanence plan identified by the time of their second Child Looked After (CLA) review, which must be held no later than 4 months after the child became *looked after*. IROs have specific responsibilities to monitor and review the progress of permanence plans for all CiC and to challenge identified delay using the Dispute Resolution process.

For most CiC, permanence is achieved in conjunction with legal Orders: Care Orders, Child Arrangements Orders, Special Guardianship Orders or Adoption Orders (usually following Care and Placement Orders). For some CiC, ongoing voluntary arrangements (section 20) remain appropriate, for example, children who are accommodated due to significant additional needs and unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC), however these CiC also must have a permanence plan identified and should be kept under regular review.

Contingency plans are an important part of permanence planning for CiC, until such a time as a permanence plan has been achieved. The paramount considerations in permanence planning for all CiC should be, in order of priority: reunification to parental care; kinship care / Special Guardianship or other legal Orders placing a child within their family network; adoption; or an agreed plan of long-term fostering.

Permanence includes ensuring there is proactive planning for CiC who are approaching adulthood, ensuring that there is a clear pathway for them to achieve semi-independent or independent living, or remaining with their foster carers under Staying Put arrangements.

These terms of reference should be read in conjunction with the terms of reference for the Accommodation Pathway Panel (for CiC aged over 17 years), the Legal Gateway Meeting and the Placement and Resource Panel.

Social workers and their managers should ensure they follow the Permanence Planning Meeting process and practice guidance for all CiC.

## **2. Objectives**

The Permanence Panel's role is to ensure that all CiC have a permanence plan and that this is progressed and achieved without delay. Where actual or potential delay is identified, the Permanence Panel identifies actions required in order to progress the permanence plan for individual CiC, and reviews those actions at subsequent Panels in order to ensure they have been acted upon.

## **3. Membership**

The Permanence Panel is an internal mechanism only within BCP Children's Services and core membership consists of:

- Service Manager - Children in Care (Chair)
- Service Manager for IRO Service
- Administrative Support

Service Managers for In-House Fostering, Assessment Service, Children and Families First or Child Health and Disability Team (CHAD) are required to attend Panel when the permanence plan for a child under their responsibility is being considered, alongside the relevant team manager and social worker.

## **4. Panel Frequency, Agenda and Case Preparation**

The Permanence Panel takes place weekly on a Thursday afternoon. Each weekly Panel focuses on a specific cohort of CiC and the permanence plans for individual CiC to be considered are identified through contemporaneous performance data.

The agenda is circulated to core members and all relevant social workers, team managers and service managers on the Monday afternoon preceding each week's Panel.

It is the responsibility of Service Managers to ensure the attendance of social workers and team managers and that case discussion and preparation is undertaken prior to attending Panel.

## **5. Panel Remit**

On a five-weekly rotation, the Permanence Panel will consider:

- Children aged 16 and under who continue to be accommodated under s20 after 12 weeks, unless a LGM has determined that s20 is the appropriate legal status for the child;
- Children who are Placed with Parents under a Care Order;
- Children with an identified plan of reunification;
- Children who are not long-term matched with their foster carers;
- Children who do not have a permanence plan (either permanence plan not recorded, or recorded as "other") and have not already recently been reviewed in one of the above cohorts.

Some cohorts of children are excluded from consideration at the Permanence Panel:

- Children who are the subject of care proceedings: their care plans are reviewed at Legal Gateway meetings, unless the child does not have a Permanence Plan recorded;

- Children accommodated under s20 where a LGM has determined this is the appropriate legal status;
- Children aged 17: their accommodation and support needs are reviewed at Placement and Resource Panel.

The Panel will consider, depending upon the cohort being reviewed and the information presented by the social worker:

- i) Whether all parallel planning options have been fully explored and whether this is reflected in the child's Mosaic record (by way of an up to date Permanence Plan);
- ii) Whether a plan of permanence (first realistic option) has been identified by the time of the second CLA Review and whether this is reflected in the child's Mosaic record (by way of an up to date Permanence Plan);
- iii) Whether legal advice may be required to consider the child's current legal status;
- iv) Whether plans for reunification and children Placed with Parents are progressing or at risk of drift and delay;
- v) Whether plans for children requiring long-term matching are progressing or at risk of drift and delay.

## 6. Panel Outcomes and Recording and Completing Actions

The Panel will identify and agree the actions required to progress the permanence plan for individual CiC. Actions may include:

- i) convening a permanence planning meeting and recording the permanence plan on the child's Mosaic record;
- ii) referral to a Legal Gateway Meeting with a clear recommendation for achieving permanence, in order to for legal advice to be given and a decision to be made regarding the appropriate course of action;
- iii) convening a CLA review and / or initiation of the Dispute Resolution process;
- iv) assessments required in order to progress care and permanence planning decisions (eg Placement with Parents assessment, parenting assessment, sibling assessment);
- v) support and intervention required to achieve permanence (eg reunification support, placement / foster carer support).

The specific actions identified for each CiC's permanence planning are made available within three working days and will be recorded on the child's Mosaic case notes by the panel administrator as follows: 'Title' *Permanence Panel Actions (date)*; 'Type of Note' *Management Oversight & Decision*. All actions should include who is responsible for undertaking each action with a specified date by which each action is to be achieved.

Actions are also recorded in the Permanence Tracker (Permanency Tracking Panel Teams Channel) for review at subsequent Permanence Panels.

Service managers are ultimately responsible for ensuring that team managers and social workers complete the agreed actions and that this is reflected in the child's Mosaic record (case notes and relevant work steps), and that the Permanence Tracker is updated with progress against actions previously agreed. The Permanence Tracker should be updated prior to the next Panel when the relevant cohort of CiC is being considered.