



Bradford Children and Families Trust

Permanence Decision Making

Terms of Reference - Permanence Panel

Section 1 – Permanence Panel (Decision Making)

1.0 Aim of the Permanence Panel

1.1 The Permanence Panel aims to deliver permanence for children in care, including those children subject to care proceedings, by ensuring that plans are agreed as part of the Permanence Policy. The panel ensures that plans are clear with identifiable outcomes, services, and actions in place to meet needs.

2.0 Business of the Permanence Panel

2.1 To support and approve permanence plans for children, including progression to legal permanence through Special Guardianship.

2.2 The Permanence Panel endorses initial plans for permanence made for children accommodated under Section 20 Children Act 1989 (please note that initial agreement to accommodate a child under s20 arrangements should go to legal gateway panel), and **all** children subject to Care Proceedings, except those where the plan is adoption. For children who have a plan of adoption, they are heard by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) for Adoption at SHOBPA.

2.3 Where the care plan of long-term fostering has been previously agreed and a long-term match can progress, matches for either in-house or Independent Fostering Agency foster carers be presented to permanence panel for a recommendation of the match. The fostering Agency Decision Maker (ADM) will ratify the decision to agree the long-term match within 20 days of panel.

3.0 Adoption

3.1 Where there is a care plan for a sibling to be considered by the Adoption ADM at SHOBPA and there are siblings for whom a different plan is proposed, ADM and the chair of Permanence Panel are to jointly consider the plans and agree the sequence for decision making. Social workers should undertake a sibling assessment that considers the impact on all the children of being separated. The views of the IRO should always be obtained and shared with the ADM in preparation for SHOBPA.

Date agreed 01/05/24

To be reviewed 01/11/24

3.2 The Adoption ADM and the Permanence Panel chair should aim to meet as soon as is practicable to discuss the different plans.

3.3 A plan for a change from adoption should also be determined by the adoption ADM. Where there is a plan for adoption that has changed, a decision about the application to revoke the Placement Order must be agreed by the adoption ADM.

4.0 Structure

4.1 Permanence Panel is a weekly meeting that agrees the permanence plan for all children and young people in care.

5.0 The timing of attendance at Permanence Panel

5.1 For children subject of care proceedings, attendance at Permanence Panel is required before the submission of the Final Care Plan to court. The permanence plan is presented to panel prior to the submission of the final care plan, but must follow receipt of all assessments that inform the plan. This will require forward planning and timetabling, booking onto panel once the dates are agreed in court. This means that as soon as the filing date is set by the court, social workers must book their slot.

5.2 Permanence Panel considers and recommends the final legal order required to support the plan as well as the plan itself.

5.3 The views of the child, parents, the IRO, and Guardian must be sought and included within the final care plan that is provided to the Panel.

5.4 Paperwork for children subject to care proceedings:

5.4.1 All relevant assessments that inform the final care plan

5.4.2 Draft final care plan

5.4.3 Any support plans (e.g. SGO support plan)

5.4.4 Any financial agreement requests.

5.4.5 CLA review minutes and outcomes

5.5 For children subject of Section 20 Children Act 1989 arrangements, attendance at panel should occur before the four-month child in care review. The permanence plan for the child is then agreed by panel and this is the plan presented to the 4-month review.

5.6 Paperwork for children subject to S20:

5.6.1 Most recent single assessment to inform continuing of S20.

5.6.2 Pathway / Care Plan

5.6.3 CLA review minutes and outcomes

5.7 At any point in a child's life when there is a recommendation that a permanence plan is to be changed; this should be prior to the child's next review, including reunification or progression to Special Guardianship.

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5.8 Paperwork for change of care plan:

- 5.8.1 Most recent single assessment (or other relevant assessment) that relates to the change of care plan.
- 5.8.2 Care Plan
- 5.8.3 CLA review minutes and outcomes
- 5.8.4 PWP report if applicable
- 5.8.5 Special Guardianship Support plan (and any finance requests)

5.9 Fostering matches.

5.10 Paperwork for long-term fostering matches:

- 5.10.1 Up to date matching report
- 5.10.2 Care Plan
- 5.10.3 CLA review minutes and outcomes
- 5.10.4 Most recent FIRO report for Foster Carer review (and/or panel minutes)
- 5.10.5 Copy of the safer care plan for the child (each child if sibling group)
- 5.10.6 For IFAs, proof of approval as long term foster carers, evidence of up to date medical, DBS and other statutory checks.

6.0 When not to attend Permanence Panel

- 6.1 Children where the plan is adoption. Decision is taken by the ADM for Adoption at SHOBPA.
- 6.2 Separated Migrant Children – these children should be presented to legal gateway as to whether care proceedings should be issued within 4 weeks of children and young people becoming looked after.

7.0 Decisions made outside Permanence Panel.

- 7.1 It should be exceptional circumstances that a permanence plan is agreed outside of Panel. Any decision made outside of panel must have the relevant Head of Service oversight. The reason for an out of panel decision must be clearly recorded and communicated to the panel chair.

8.0 Guidance for Social Workers on booking a panel slot and the paperwork required for Panel.

- 8.1 Booking items onto Permanence Panel is done by the allocated social worker via the dedicated email. This should be done immediately following the court timetable being agreed. Please ensure that for Care Proceedings, the filing date for the care plan is included, as these will be given priority for a slot on the agenda.
- 8.2 Panel admin will email a confirmation of your booking request and confirm the documents that will be required for panel. You will also be advised of the cut-off date for producing the report for panel.

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- 8.3 Papers for panel should be sent no later than 3 days prior to panel.
- 8.4 All papers should be checked, and quality assured by the Service Manager before they are submitted, to ensure that they contain the appropriate information for the panel.
- 8.5 To avoid deferring of cases timetabled for Panel and ensure that urgent cases on the waiting list can be slotted in, the Social Worker or Team Manager should alert panel admin immediately when they know the permanence panel slot is not needed.
- 8.6 It is important that the child's social worker attends. Where there is a positive recommendation for a kinship placement, the supervising social worker who has completed the kinship assessment should also attend.

9.0 Panel Membership – Permanence Panel

Membership	Role	Duties
Chair	Head of Service CIC	Chair
Deputy/ 2 nd Chair	Head of Service Locality	2 nd Chair
CIC Panel Member	SM rota CIC	Quality assurance of child related documents
Locality Panel Member	SM rota Locality	Quality assurance of child related documents
Fostering Panel Member	SM/TM rota	Quality assurance of fostering and special guardianship related documents
IRO Panel Member	SM	Quality assurance of CLA/ FIRO process and paperwork
Legal		Advice when required
Business Support		Taking minutes, logging actions and panel management.

10.0 Quoracy

- 10.1 Three panel members are required to be quorate including the Chair, an IRO representative, and a service manager.