## Permanency Planning Meetings Practice Guidance

In Devon, we carefully consider permanence planning from the beginning of our involvement. which is best practice for children who may come into our care. Permanence planning discussions are not just undertaken in a multi-agency forum, practitioners and managers discuss permanence all the time.

The ‘Permanency Planning Meeting’ process aims to develop a formal approach to permanency planning and can aid in smooth transitions and avoiding drift. Permanency Planning Meetings differ from the child’s statutory Child in Care Review Meeting, which is the child’s meeting, chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer.

## Purpose

The purpose of the Permanency Planning Meeting is to:

* Develop the initial proposal for the Permanence Plan
* Develop the Permanence Plan to ensure parallel planning is in place at the earliest opportunity to prevent drift and delay.
* Develop the Permanence Plan to present to the first and subsequent statutory reviews with the plan formulated for no later than the second statutory review
* Monitor the progress of the Permanence Plan in meeting the needs of the child in relation to: Health, Education, Emotional and Behavioural Development, Identity, Family and Social Relationships, Social Presentation and Self-Care Skills.
* Provide evidence of decision making and rationale for the chosen Permanence Plan.

The meeting will consider:

* The assessment of the child’s current and future needs;
* Whether such needs can be met on a permanent basis by a return home or through an alternative home;
* Where an alternative to a return home is considered;
* The viability of any possible connected carer placements;
* The most appropriate placement type that will meet the child’s permanence needs;
* The most appropriate legal outcome to ensure permanence in the proposed placement type;
* Whether an appropriate range of contingency plans are in place, who will do what and when to achieve the plan without delay

## Permanency Planning Meeting will

* Avoid drift and delay occurring, especially when a child is in our care under a Section 20 accommodation arrangement.
* Ensure reunification is fully explored and what intervention or resources would be required for this to succeed.
* If the child is in long term care arrangement, the meeting allows for consideration of the suitability of current or alternative permanent fostering carers (the match will be presented at Permanence Panel for ratification).
* Enable robust planning where there are potential risks to the stability of a permanent placement (e.g. violence/risk of abduction/need for geographical distance) and there is a need to consider a placement stability meeting with providers/carers;
* To ensure concurrent or parallel planning of permanence plans is taking place, for example the consideration of viable family and friends to become special guardians or connected carers. To identify actions when this has not been explored.
* Where adoption is being considered, the meeting will offer scrutiny of the proposed plan prior to the request of an Agency Decision Maker decision.
* For children, where a Placement Order (for Adoption) has been made, there is a requirement for a further statutory review under the Adoption Agencies Regulations, 3 months and 6 months post Placement Order to consider why the child had not been placed in an adoptive placement. A Permanency Planning Meeting should be called before these review points if continuing assessment of the child indicates that Adoption may not be viable.
* When a young person is due to leave our care, the Permanency Planning Meeting should confirm the young person's care leaving status and impact on their leaving care entitlement and transition plans. This must take place before the young person’s final Child in Care or Pathway Plan Review meeting.
* Where the agreed permanence plan is for the child to remain with parents, the meeting can serve to ensure necessary support is available to sustain this permanence plan.

If there are substantial changes made to a child’s permanence plan a statutory review should be convened ideally within ten working days. Any agreed changes should be recorded on the Care Plan. The Independent Reviewing Officer has a responsibility to ensure Care Plans are informed by an up-to-date assessment.

## Frequency

Permanency Planning Meetings should be taking place during periods of pre proceedings and care proceedings in 6 weekly intervals.

Permanency Planning Meetings should take place no later than 10 days of a child coming into our care and then 6 weekly until the plan of permanence is achieved.

Permanency Planning Meetings should be reintroduced if the permanence plan previously in place, no longer meets the needs of the child.

Permanency Planning Meetings will also take place where there is instability in care arrangements or long term matching can be achieved, following a Permanency Planning Meeting, attendance at Permanence Panel will be required.

## Attendees

The following should be invited:

* Child’s social worker (Chair)
* Nominated practitioner from Fostering Team where fostering is a realistic permanence option.
* Nominated practitioner from Adopt South West if adoption is one of the realistic options.
* A representative from the Kinship Service if care with family/friends is one of the realistic options.
* Independent Reviewing Officer
* Children’s Guardian (where care proceedings have been issued)
* Parents/Carer where appropriate. If it not appropriate, the reasons for this to be included in the minutes and their views to be obtained prior to the meeting.

The view of the child(ren) must be sought in advance by the social worker and shared in the meeting.

It is critical, any professional who might need to contribute to any of the potential plans attends the meeting.

## Chairing the Permanency Planning Meeting

Permanency Planning Meetings will be chaired by the allocated Social Worker, however for those children where there is complexity or contentious issues, consideration should be given to the meeting being chaired by the Team Manager.

## Permanence Plan

Permanence options are set out and a permanence plan is drawn up. The permanence plan should:

* Be clear about the actions needed to achieve the plan and who is responsible
* Have clear timescales.
* Have necessary resources available to achieve the plan.
* Have a contingency plan in place, in the event of the original plan not being successful.
* Be reviewed and dates set for this at the meeting.
* When adoption is identified as an option, there will be an immediate action for the team to initiate the ADM process.

## Reviewing the Permanence Plan

The Permanence Plan should be kept under review until a final decision on permanence has been made and this plan has been achieved.

Following the plan being achieved, Permanence Plan reviews should take place at least twice in a 12-month period to inform the Child in Care Reviews and should take into consideration:

* If permanence plan needs to be changed e.g. reunification, Special Guardianship Order to care giver
* Post 18 arrangements for Care Leavers

The Care Plan or Pathway Plan is then updated to reflect the Permanence Plan updates and presented at the Child in Care Review for endorsing.