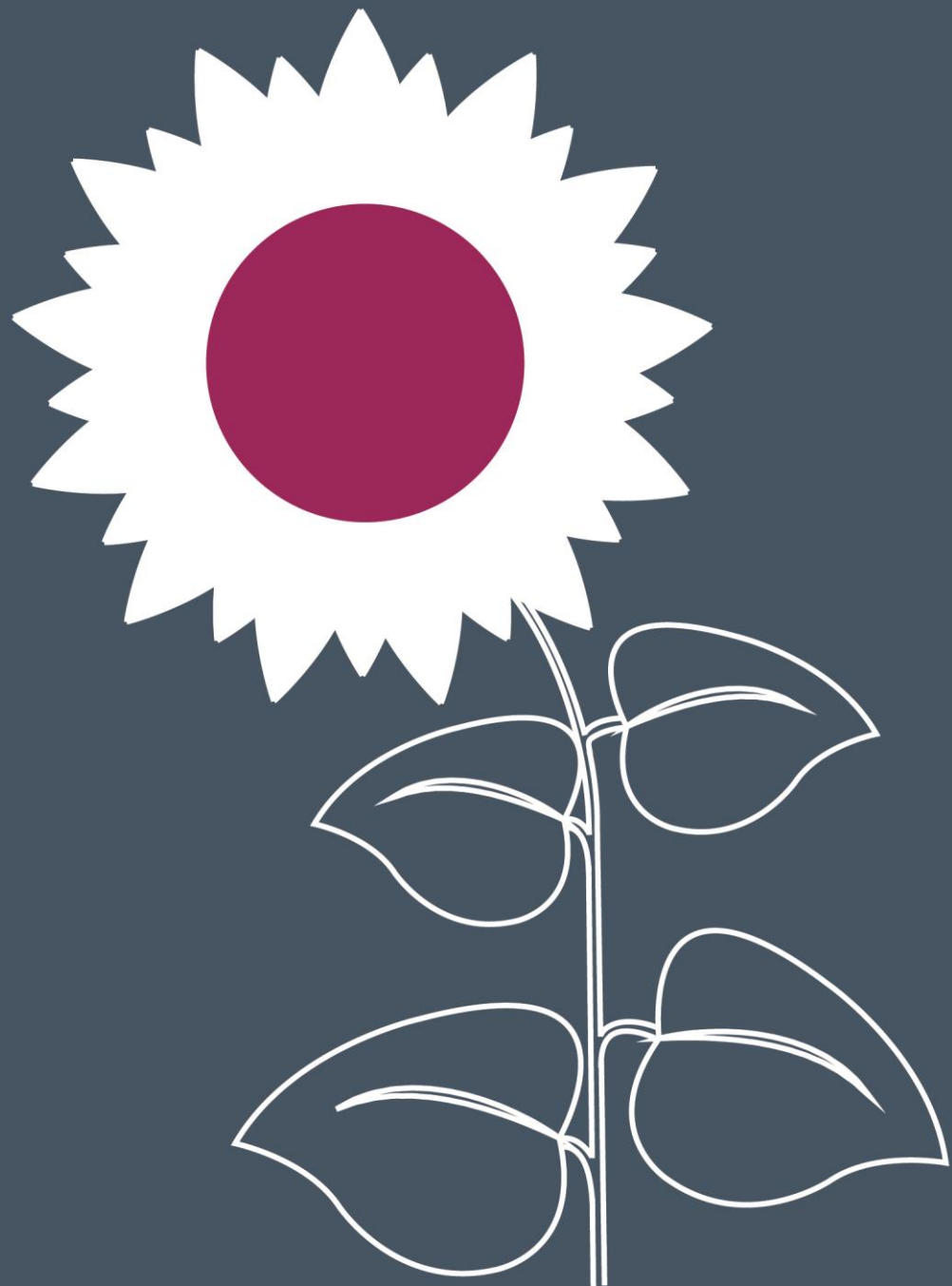


Disruption Policy

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PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO UNPLANNED PLACEMENT ENDINGS

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1.0 Policy Statement

- 1.1 Permanence Planning requires that we promote stability of placement for children in care.
- 1.2 Ideally this should only mean one change of placement for a child in care, from their first care placement to adoption, or a Residence Order/Special Guardianship Order with family/friends carers.
- 1.3 However, realistically, temporary placements breakdown as the depth of a child's needs unfold or where legal permanence cannot be achieved and temporary placements become protracted, and long term placements matched in good faith some years previously may be challenged by the changing needs of an adolescent torn between loyalty to foster carers and undisclosed loyalty to birth family
- 1.4 Where a child's placement is threatening to breakdown, it is expected that before making a referral for a new placement, every effort will have been made to prevent the breakdown through the holding of a care planning meeting and the provision of services to support the placement.
- 1.5 If the provision of support to the placement fails to prevent a breakdown a disruption meeting must be held for all adoption and long term fostering breakdowns and during permanence planning:
 - if the placement was made within a foster carers approval category
 - the placement was outside approval category but the child/young person has been placed for at least 6 months

2.0 Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to address disruptions during planning for permanence, long-term fostering and adoptive placements.
- 2.2 Whilst previous good practice sometimes involved holding a meeting after a placement had broken down, this policy incorporates a formal process to anticipate the sequence of events which lead to placements ending in an unplanned way in order to support the placement and prevent disruption occurring.
- 2.3 The holding of a disruption meeting in the event of a placement breakdown allows participants to acknowledge and document the seriousness of the difficulties faced in the placement and the actions taken to address those

difficulties, and to then learn from this experience in order to influence future care planning for the child.

3.0 Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies whenever there is an unplanned ending to a foster placement.

Unplanned also includes those placements where the carers have given notice. In relation to adoption placements this policy applies for the duration of the adopted child's childhood.

4.0 Definition

- 4.1 A 'disruption' means any move that takes place:
- From a placement which was intended to last for the duration of planning for permanence
 - From a placement which was made as part of a child's Permanence Plan; i.e. any unplanned move or ending of a long term foster home or adoption placement

5.0 Legal Context

- Adoption and Children Act 2002
<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/20020038.htm> - aofs
- Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005
<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2005/20050389.htm>
- Stoke-on-Trent's Permanence Policy and Permanence Care Planning Procedures
- National Minimum Standards for Fostering and Adoption
- Stability of placement indicators

6.0 Permanence Planning Disruption Procedure

Ref: Appendix 1 Disruption Meetings: Planning for Permanence
Appendix 2 Disruption Meetings: Adoption and Long Term Fostering

- 6.1 The Permanence Policy, associated Adoption Policies and other relevant Children and Young People's Services policies are designed to maximise children and young people's opportunities for achieving permanence. As a starting point, staff should ensure that they adhere to all Children and Young People's Services policies and be informed by the practice guidance within them when planning for children and young people who are looked after.

- 6.2 In some situations, it may become apparent that the foster home identified during permanence planning or as a long term foster placement needs to be changed in order to meet the child's changing needs.
- 6.3 Or it may be that the viability of an adoption placement becomes an issue because the child has greater needs than originally assessed.
- 6.4 This planning for a change of placement should be done within established planning and review processes, followed by referral for another placement.
- 6.5 However, if it becomes apparent that either a foster placement or an adoptive placement is at risk of disruption, a care planning meeting involving all those involved in planning for permanence or maintaining placement stability for the young person must be held in the placement to consider what supports may be introduced to sustain the placement where a change of placement is not in the child/young person's best interest. No child may be moved from a placement until such a meeting has taken place.

7.0 Preventing a Placement Disruption

- 7.1 Preventing placement disruption begins with strong, effective care planning, which is key to improving outcomes for children who are looked after, and in particular, placement stability. **Ref: Permanence Policy and Permanence Care Planning Procedures.**
- 7.2 Placement stability and the prevention of disruption is further supported by rigorous case management, strong parallel planning practices, use of available placement support resources and good coordination with professionals from all other agencies responsible for the health, education and well-being of children in care.
- 7.3 Where it appears that a placement may not meet its aims, it is good practice to initiate a care planning meeting to support and maintain the placement. To wait until a foster carer gives notice often means waiting until attitudes are entrenched and support unproductive.
- 7.4 In order to ascertain the nature and risks to the current placement and what needs to happen to support placement stability, the social worker in collaboration with the adoption/supervising worker will:
- organise one or more, if appropriate, planning meeting(s) with staff from Placement Support
 - gather and analyse information and views from:
 - ✓ child/young person
 - ✓ adopters/foster carers
 - consider the range of options to be explored within existing resources that will enable the carer to continue with the placement e.g. support from Placement Support Team, Adoption Support Service. If additional resources are required, the social worker/ adoption/ supervising social

worker will discuss these with their Practice Manager, who will authorise them where appropriate.

- draw up a plan of support for both the child and the carers, which will be reviewed within timescales until either the placement ends in a planned way or the stability of the placement is restored
- consult on a regular basis with the relevant Principal/Practice Manager about the risk of disruption and the actions to be taken

7.5 The Conference and Review Manager must note :

- any significant changes to the child's Care Plan - this would include a placement breakdown
- meetings which consider aspects of the child's Care Plan
- any proposed changes to the child's Care Plan

8.0 Responding to a Placement Disruption

8.1 If a placement disrupts before any work can be done to prevent the breakdown, support and counselling for the child and the adopters/carers will be provided before the case is formally reviewed. The social worker will undertake this for the child and the adoption/supervising social worker will provide this for the foster carer/adopter.

8.2 A disruption meeting will then be arranged:

- For children/ young people who are placed for adoption, no earlier than 28 days and no later than 42 days after the date on which the child is returned to the agency.
- For fostered children, within 10 working days of the placement ending.
- For children in permanence planning meeting the criteria for a disruption meeting, within 10 working days of the placement ending

8.3 Where the foster carer/adopter has given notice of the placement ending, the social worker /supervising social worker will:

- arrange any immediate support via the Placement Support Team,
- arrange and hold a disruption meeting within 2 weeks of receipt of the notice.

8.4 If the notice is not withdrawn after the meeting, the child's social worker will obtain agreement to another placement via the Principal Manager and Service Manager using the Placement Referral Form.

8.5 The minutes of the disruption meeting should be included with the Placement Referral Form and both should be provided to the Fostering Service to identify an appropriate alternative placement.

Appendix 1

Disruption meetings Planning for Permanence	
When will a meeting be convened	<p>For children/ young people who are in temporary placements during planning for permanence, a judgement needs to be made about the aim and purpose of the placement before deciding to hold a disruption meeting ie if the placement was made outside an age range, in an emergency and broke down within 3 months, the reasons would be self-evident.</p> <p>As a rule of thumb, a disruption meeting should be held:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In all cases if the placement was made within a foster carers approval category <p style="text-align: center;">Or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The placement was outside approval category but the child/young person has been placed for at least 6 months
What is the purpose and format	<p>In order to establish sufficient understanding of the factors that have led to placement breakdown, consideration will be given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief resume using structure of framework for assessment • Why child came into care and needs at that time. • Quality of information on child available at the time of placement • Reason for making this particular placement. • Details of any introductions that took place. • Details of any support needs that were identified at the beginning and during the placement through behaviour support plans • What led up to the disruption/precipitating events • Is there any support/resources that can be put in place to avoid disruption? If so, an action plan to be made with date for review planning meeting. • Future plans • Who will be informed of the outcomes and who will be sent the summary of key points and minutes (taken by the social worker)
What preparation is required	<p>The Social Worker will review the child's file so that they can give an account of all the child's history and answer any questions that arise.</p> <p>The Supervising Worker will review the foster carers file so that they can answer any questions in respect to assessment, approval, previous placements, annual reviews.</p>

Who will attend	<p>A Conference and Review Manager who customarily chairs statutory reviews for children in care should chair the meeting and invite:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Worker • Supervising worker • child/ young person or advocate • Foster carer(s) • Other professional(s) as necessary
What is the role of the chairperson	<p>The Chair of the Meeting should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that a 'no blame' approach is taken(placements rarely disrupt because of single factors) • Identify and summarise key contributory factors to the disruption • Ensure that an action plan is developed for the child • Ensure minutes and key summary points are circulated according to the appropriate timescales. • Ensure agreement on who will take the following actions after the meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Send summary of key points to the Fostering Panel within 6 weeks of the meeting if the outcome is a change of placement. ○ Attach minutes to child/ young person's file <p>Send minutes to the Family Finding Coordinator within 2 weeks if outcome is a change of placement</p>

Disruption meetings	
Adoption/Long term fostering	
When will a meeting be convened	<p>For children/ young people who are placed for adoption, no earlier than 28 days and no later than 42 days after the date on which the child is returned to the agency.</p> <p>For fostered children, within 10 working days of the ending of the placement.</p>
What is the purpose and format	<p>In order to establish sufficient understanding of the factors that have led to placement breakdown, consideration will be given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • child's life prior to being looked after • reception into care • the child's life whilst looked after • selection and matching process of the adopter(s)/ carer(s) • introduction process to the adopter(s)/ carer(s) • the placement • disruption and subsequent events • future plans • who will be informed of the outcomes and who will be sent the summary of key points and minutes (taken by the social worker)
What preparation is required	<p>The Social Worker will make the following information available to all participants within a reasonable period (to be agreed with the chairperson) before the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the child's history • circumstances leading up the placement disrupting • child's view of the placement and the disruption • the adopters'/ carers' view of placement and the disruption • any relevant planning and decision making issues • view of other professionals e.g. education, health
Who will attend	<p>The circumstances that surround the disruption will influence who the Social Worker invites.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairperson • Social Worker/ the Adoption/Supervising worker/ child/ young person or advocate • The carer(s)/ adopter(s) who had cared for the child • The child's current carer • Fostering Manager • Adoption Manager • Other professional(s)

What is the role of the chairperson

A chairperson (of at least principal manager level) who is independent of the case will:

- Ensure that a 'no blame' approach is taken
- Identify and summarise key contributory factors to the disruption
- Ensure that an action plan is developed for the child
- Ensure minutes and key summary points are circulated according to the appropriate timescales.
- Ensure agreement on who will take the following actions after the meeting:
 - Send summary of key points to the Adoption Panel/ Fostering Panel within 6 weeks of the meeting being held
 - Attach minutes to child/ young person's file
 - Send minutes to the Family Finding Coordinator within 2 weeks.