



Stronger Families
and
Resilient Children



Derby City Council

Derby City Council Permanency Policy

Version 3.0

September 2020

Policy Scope

All children and young people deserve a secure and stable family home. This must be within a family environment unless there are significant needs that cannot be met within a family placement. Where this cannot be achieved within birth families, there is a duty to provide an alternative permanent home. All children must have a permanency plan where a decision has been made that they cannot live with their birth or extended family within an appropriate timescale to prevent unnecessary drift and delay.

There are three main routes to permanence:

1. Where a mother of an unborn child requests that the Local Authority place her child for adoption following their birth.
2. Following the presentation of a case to a Locality Case Management Meeting, where the decision is made to explore permanency options outside of the birth family – see Options for Permanence.
3. Prior to a child's second statutory looked after review (will be referred to as LAC reviews from here on in) so that the review can then endorse the permanence plan for a child.

Options for Permanence

1. Returning Home.
2. Placement with Family or Friends or Connected Persons.
3. Adoption.
4. Fostering for Adoption and Temporary Approval as Foster Carers of Approved Prospective Adopters.
5. Special Guardianship Orders.
6. Child Arrangements Orders.
7. Long-term Fostering.
8. Staying Put.



Derby City Council



Assessing and Planning for Permanence

Assessments of a child's needs in relation to his or her Permanence Plan must:

- Focus on outcomes.
- Consider stability issues, including the child's and family's needs for long-term support and the child's needs for links, including contact, with his or her parents, siblings, and wider family network.
- Be clearly linked to previous assessments of the child's needs.

Where a child has made significant and strong attachments to their current carers, it may well be that those carers are best placed to provide a permanent placement for the child. However, no assumptions should be made that existing foster carers or other parties requesting to become permanent carers for the child are necessarily best placed to do so and no requests should be made directly to foster carers to consider becoming a permanent carer for a child.

Where this is deemed appropriate, this should first be discussed with the foster carer's supervising social worker, who can explore this option with the foster carer. If it appears to be a viable option, then the foster carer will undergo an assessment as a potential permanent carer for the child. This process may take place alongside assessments of other applicants.

At the outset of the policy (July 2019), any child who has been in their current foster placement longer than 2 years will be deemed to be in a permanent placement and will not be heard at panel to create capacity for those cases that have been in their current foster care placement for a time period of between 9 months and 2 years.

However, for children who have been placed with their foster carers for over 2 years exploration of Special Guardianship should be undertaken with the foster carers and discussed in LAC reviews in line with the SGO tracking process.

All cases that have permanent fostering as their identified care plan will need to be heard at panel as soon as that care plan has been agreed (no later than 9 months from agreement of final care plan). When cases with a care plan of permanent fostering are transferred to the Children In Care Service (from Locality), they will be allocated for completion of a Single Assessment with the specific remit of assessing suitability of permanent fostering as a permanency option in their current placement.

Social Workers will need to follow the process identified in Appendix 3 in order to book cases onto panel.

If a child is placed with a connected person, discussions regarding permanence should already have been undertaken as part of the viability assessment and subsequent fostering assessment. It is expected that in the vast majority of cases a





Special Guardianship Order will be pursued and completed within 12 months of commencement of placement. All Special Guardianship Orders will have a robust support plan and access to support post order through the Exit from Care Team Social Workers based in the Child Permanence Team, alongside access to universal services.

Where carers have expressed an interest in a Special Guardianship Order they should be visited within 2 weeks to share information. Once their formal expression of interest and request to be assessed has been received the case should be allocated for the assessment to commence.

Assessments should take no longer than 12 weeks from the receipt of the request from the carers to be assessed and the case should be presented to the 1st panel after the 12 week timescale for completion.

The Team Manager should record in supervision the timeline from receiving the formal request for assessment, the 12 week completion date and panel date. This should continue to be reviewed and any reasons for delay clearly recorded.

Children who have a care plan of adoption and the decision is made to revoke the Placement Order also need to have their long term placements needs and plan for permanency assessed and decisions on future care plans need to be discussed at a Case Management meeting.

The Placement Order revocation work will be undertaken by the Child Permanence Team including any work with birth family which may be required to inform the application and long term care plan.

The child will be allocated a social worker within the Children in Care Service once the application to revoke the Placement Order has been made. The Children in Care Social Worker will assess the child's long term placement needs. If the current foster carer is offering permanence, the assessment of their ability to meet the child's need should progress to permanency panel on completion of the assessment which should be no later than 3 months after the revocation of the Placement Order or sooner if there is no contest to the care plan by birth parents.

If the current foster placement is not offering permanence or the assessment identifies that the carers are unable to meet the child's long term needs an alternative placement should be sought where the child and carers are appropriately matched and placement is intended to provide permanence once assessment has taken place. In such circumstances the plan for permanence should be presented to panel within 9 months of the making of the placement.





In both of the above circumstances, both the child's Adoption and Children in Care/Locality Social Workers should attend the panel.

It is important to note that cases with a care plan of permanent foster care and who are placed with internal DCC foster carers will be heard at the DCC fostering panel and those cases with a care plan of permanent foster care and who are placed with IFA carers will be heard at permanence panel.

Placement with Parents need to be considered at the 6 month LAC review and determine when it would be appropriate to discharge the Care Order and what other options there could be to support the family other than sharing parental responsibility.

Identifying Permanence Options

Child Arrangements/Special Guardianship Orders	Adoption	Long Term Fostering
Child needs the security of a legally defined placement with alternative carers, but does not require a lifelong commitment involving a change of identity.	Child's primary need is to belong to a family who will make a lifelong commitment.	Primary need is for a stable, loving family environment whilst there is still a significant level of continued involvement with the birth family.
Child's relation, foster or other carer needs to exercise day to day parental responsibility and is prepared to do so as a lifelong commitment.	Child's birth parents are not able or not willing to share parental responsibility in order to meet their child's needs, even though there may be contact.	Child has a clear sense of identity with the birth family, whilst needing to be looked after away from home.
There is no need for continuing monitoring and review by the Local Authority, although support services may still need to be arranged.	Child needs an opportunity to develop a new sense of identity whilst being supported to maintain or develop a healthy understanding of their past.	There is need for continuing oversight and monitoring of the child's developmental progress.
Child has a strong attachment to the alternative carers and legally defined permanence is assessed as a positive contribution to their sense of belonging and security.	Child expresses a wish to be adopted.	Birth parents are able and willing to exercise a degree of parental responsibility.





Permanency Panel

A Permanency Panel consisting of HoS Safeguarding/Specialist Services – alternate Chair, representative from IRO Service, representation from locality and children in care services DHoS/ Team Manager will convene on a monthly basis to:

- Ratify the matching of all permanent placements for children with agency foster carers.
- Ratify all Staying Put arrangements.
- Ratify Special Guardianship Assessments and Support Plans.
- Consider good practice guide at Appendix 1.

Standard documents for Panel to consider any permanence option – 1 week prior to panel:

- **Permanent Foster Care:** Updated Social Work Single Assessment. The Single Assessment will be a targeted assessment around the suitability of placement long term; Include evidence of the voice of the child and their expressed wishes and feelings, and the views of the carers, the IRO and any other significant persons.
- Full up to date child Chronology.
- Minutes of the child's last Looked after Review.
- Life Story Work (though absence at this stage will not preclude consideration at Permanency Panel and securing a permanence option).
- report from the agency on annual review, safeguarding issues, training, medical fitness and carers and agency view of long term match; assessment of the carers in respect of other foster placements and the impact on the child needing long term fostering. See appendix 4.
- **Special Guardianship Orders:** BAAF form C and support plan and if IFA carers, approved financial form from HOS/Service Director.
- **Staying Put:** Written agreement, Staying Put proposal and copy of latest Pathway Plan.

The panel will then approve, reject or defer the application acting in the best interests of the child.

Actions taken post approval (Permanent Foster Care):

- Social Worker to visit the child and advise them of the decision;





- Attached letter to be sent to carers by Chair of Panel explaining the rationale for approval – See Appendix 2;
- Child's file to be updated to reflect the decision.

Actions to be taken post rejection (Permanent Foster Care):

- Social Worker to visit the child and advise them of the decision.
- Attached letter to be sent to carers by Chair of Panel explaining the rationale for rejection – Appendix 2.
- Urgent care planning decisions to be considered in respect to placement sustainability.
- Social Worker to visit child and explain the reasons why placement was not ratified.

Actions to be taken post deferment (Permanent Foster Care):

- Social Worker to visit the child and advise them of the decision.
- Attached letter to be sent to the Carers explaining rationale for deferment – Appendix 2.
- Action Plan with timescales developed to respond to issues.
- Book case onto next available panel. Any change of future approval, resignation or incidents or allegations will be considered within case management and care planning processes.





Appendix 1

Good Practice Guide

Identifying the best permanence option

The permanency planning process will identify which permanence option is most likely to meet the needs of the individual child, taking account of his/her wishes and feelings.

The Panel will consider:

- The assessment process and ask how stability for this child will be achieved.
- Long term stability means the sense of a permanent home with the same family or group of people, as part of the same community and culture, and with long-term continuity of relationships and identity.
- Short or medium term stability or continuity will be important for children who are going to stay in care for a brief period before going home and for children who are going to need new permanent arrangements. The quality of a child's attachments and life will be detrimentally affected by uncertainties, separations from what /who is known and changes of school and placement.
- Educational experiences, links with extended family, hobbies and friendships and support to carers, contribute to guarding against disruption and placement breakdown.
- The importance of carefully listening to what children want from the placement, helping the relationship between carer and child to build, making thorough plans around contact with family, providing vigorous support during crisis times and taking a sufficiently flexible attitude to adoption by carers.
- The older a child is, the less likely it is that the child will secure a permanent family through adoption.
- The larger the family group of children, the harder it is to secure a single placement that will meet all the needs of all the children.





Appendix 2

Letter Template for Permanent Fostering

Notification of Permanency Panel Decision

Dear

Re: (insert child's name here)

I am writing to advise you of the decision made by the Permanency Panel on (insert date here).

As you are aware this case was presented to us following a recommendation made at the looked after review.

We have considered the representations and reports provided and have decided to (Approve/Reject/Defer) this application.

Yours sincerely
(insert name here)

Panel Chair

Cc:

Child's Social Worker

Carer's Supervising Social Worker

Child's Independent Reviewing Officer





Appendix 3

Process for booking permanent Foster Care cases into Permanence Panel

- Permanency Panel will take place on the last Wednesday of each month. There will be X 3 slots for cases pertaining to permanent fostering from 1pm-3.15pm. These slots will be chaired by HOS Specialist Services, with panel membership from DHOS (CIC Service) and Corporate Parenting Lead). They will be minuted by Panel Support using the agreed pro forma.
- SGO cases will be separated out into Locality Services in the morning and CIC/IDCS services in the afternoon. There will be X 4 SGO slots for cases in the morning. The Social Worker will attend (via SKYPE until further notice) to discuss the case. The slots will be 30 minutes per case and commence from 9:30am. Panel Support will minute these cases. The Chair for the morning SGO element of panel will be the HOS Locality Safeguarding, supported by a rota of Locality Safeguarding DHOS' and Corporate Parenting Lead.
- The CIC/IDCS SGO cases will then take place in the afternoon from 3:30pm (X 3 slots). The Social Worker will attend (via SKYPE until further notice) to discuss the case. The slots will be 30 minutes per case and these slots will be chaired by HOS Specialist Services, with panel membership from DHOS (CIC Service) and Corporate Parenting Lead). They will be minuted by Panel Support.
- Staying Put cases will have X 2 slots per month (30-minute time slots each) there will be no requirement for the allocated Social Worker to attend, the slots will be 11:15-11:45 and 11:45-12:15. There will be no panel support minute taking and the chair will sign off Staying Put agreements (if approved) and liaise directly with the allocated Social Worker) before adding a case note to LCS.

Booking process.

- The allocated Social Worker will need to book the child onto panel by emailing panelandminuting.support@derby.gov.uk.





- Panel Support will send a reminder of the booking to the Social Worker two weeks prior to panel requesting paperwork (see Permanence Policy for details of what paperwork is required based on the type of case to be discussed) within 1 week of panel.
- Paperwork will be collated by Panel Support and sent to Panel chair one-week pre-panel. If paperwork is not received by this point, cases will be removed from the panel list and Panel Support will e mail contact the relevant Team Manager to ask that they make direct communication with the chairing HOS to request that a case is maintained on panel if this is so desired.
- Minutes (SGO and permanent fostering) will be completed within 5 working days of panel and distributed to Panel chair to approve.
- Minutes will then be disseminated by Panel Support to chair, Social Worker, Team Manager and any other panel attendees.
- Allocated SW will then add these to Live Link on LCS and the chair will add a case note to LCS.

Suggested Notes:

Carers considering the commitment to Long term Fostering should be invited to transfer to Derby City Council. They should be offered a bespoke allowance structure that matches their current agency offer.

Formal Letter/Certificate to be sent to carers and Child by Chief Exec/DCS/Elected Members.





Appendix 4

Independent Fostering Agency Report For Derby City Council Permanency Panel

Name of child:	
DOB of Child	
Name of Supervising Social Worker	
Fostering Agency	
Name of child's Social Worker	
Name (s) of foster carers	
Number of children in placement (including subject(s))	
How many are LAC	
Date of last fostering panel	
Any recommendations from panel requiring action	
Are statutory checks of carers up to date (eg; health assessments, DBS)	
Can you confirm that the carers are up to date with all mandatory training YES/NO	
If NO what is outstanding and what is being done to address this and when will this be completed?	
Any relevant specialist training carers have undertaken- please specify	
Any identified training/support needs and how these will be addressed	
Supervising social workers report on the foster carers ability to meet the specific needs of the child/children and their care plan	
Placement	





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Health	
Education	
Emotional / behavioural / therapeutic	
Contact	
Carers assessed understanding of permanence	
Foster carers views about offering permanence to the child	
Supervising social workers views about the plan for permanency via long term fostering with the carers	

Signed:
Name:
Role:
Date:





Appendix 5.

Permanence Policy Outcomes Framework.

In order to ensure the efficacy of the permanence panel, there will be on-going permanence tracking meetings, held on a monthly basis with attendance from:

The Policy and Insight Team
HOS' (Safeguarding and Specialist Services)
DHOS' (Safeguarding and Specialist Services)

The meetings will focus on identifying all cases of children and young people who have had their 2nd LAC review, their primary and secondary permanence options and tracking these cases until permanence has been achieved.

This will help to ensure that any cases that require a permanent foster care decision are booked into either the DCC fostering panel or the permanence panel.

This will also help to ensure that permanence options are brought to as timely a conclusion as possible.

The measures the panel will track will be:

Number of children following their 2nd LAC reviews who:

- Gained permanent foster care with a DCC carer
- Gained permanent foster care with an IFA carer
- Gained permanency through fostering with IFA or DCC carer (not permanent)
- Gained permanency with a birth parent
- Gained permanency with a kinship carer (identifying both Reg 24 and Non Reg 24 approved placements)
- Gained permanency through adoption
- Gained permanency through residential care
- Gained permanency through semi-independent/supported accommodation

Measurement will commence from December 2019 with a cohort of children and young people who have yet to have their 3rd LAC review. This cohort will be tracked for progress against their identified permanence option and will be reported on going forward on a quarterly basis. The PI Team will develop these exemption reports, which will be presented to the ILACS Practice and Development board.

The Panel Support Team will also collate performance data on:

- The number of SGO support plans agreed at panel





- The number of Staying Put agreements agreed at panel on a quarterly basis.

