**How we support our Children's homes –**

**Stability, Support and Disruption Meetings**

**Stability and Support Meeting.**

**Purpose – A multi-agency meeting to explore how we can best support our child or young person and their carers to sustain the stability of their home.**

The focus of a stability and support meeting is to offer early intervention to children, young people, and carers, when issues first arise that might affect the stability of the home. The ethos is to address concerns in a compassionate, empathic, and holistic way to resolve problems in the best interests of the child. Professionals should arrange a stability and support meeting if they identify any sign of difficulty affecting the child, carer or agency which could in the future lead to instability or disruption in the home.

Maintaining a safe, stable, loving, and lasting home for the children and young people in our care is crucial for their well-being and therefore is a top priority for Lancashire County Council's Children's Social Care. The stability of a 'home away from home' offers our children and young people living apart from their birth families a sense of belonging and provides the best chance for them to thrive.

Stability and support meetings should be convened when our children's homes (foster homes or residential, in house or agency), which are otherwise assessed to be a good match for the child are at risk of unplanned ending. Stability and support meetings should not replace planning meetings, matching meetings, or regular multi-agency care planning meetings, which should be held every six weeks, unless a different frequency is agreed by the Children's Social Care Team Manager. Stability and support meetings should not replace the escalation process followed by our in-house residential homes, which is implemented once it is thought that the child's home is no longer meeting their needs, and a new home is required. Care Planning meetings should proactively consider the needs of the child, the holistic care plan, the package of support, and any additional required support. Stability and support meetings should only be called after multi-agency care planning has been exhausted or if the situation has not improved for the child and their home.

**Difference between stability and support meeting and disruption meeting.**

A stability and support meeting should be held as a preventative measure to proactively implement additional support and prevent the home from ending in an unplanned way. The meeting can be called at any stage of the child's journey and permanence planning.

A disruption meeting takes place once a Lasting Home has ended abruptly or on an unplanned basis (this includes in-house and agency fostering and residential homes). The aim of this meeting is to reflect on the disruption and see what lessons can be learnt from all those involved.

**Principles.**

Where a worker, including the child's social worker, the foster carers' supervising social worker, residential worker, independent reviewing officer (IRO), or any other worker involved with a child in our care, e.g. health or education professionals, believes that a home, which is otherwise in the child's best interests, is at risk of ending, he/she should consult with their direct line manager, and if it is appropriate, ask the child's social worker to request a stability and support meeting is held.

The meeting should be arranged within five working days of an issue being identified. For in house homes, the meeting can be chaired by either a fostering/residential team manager or the children's team manager. This should be mutually agreed depending on the presenting issues (for example, if the concerns relate to the child's behavior or presentation it might be more appropriate for the Children's Social Care team manager to chair). For agency homes, the meeting should be chaired by the children's team manager. For all meetings both the team managers (fostering/residential and children's) should be present.

The meeting should include the carers/residential key worker, their supervising social worker, the child's social worker, their respective managers, and any other professional (e.g., teacher/ therapist) who is involved with the child or young person. This may include the IRO where this would be helpful. In addition, for children in residential homes, the social workers for other children within the home may attend to consider the impact of the children and young people on each other, and to explore overall stability within the home. In some instances, a joint stability meeting to consider more than one child living together in the same home is required. All attendees must be well prepared to attend the meeting so that they are able to contribute appropriately and secure the best possible outcome.

Notes should be taken for all stability and support meetings, so there is a clear record of attendees, issues of concern, analysis, and actions/decisions with names of workers/tasks/timescales and identified measures for reviewing if objectives have been achieved. The meeting notes will be circulated to all attendees and any other parties who need to be updated on the plan for the child. The meeting chair will agree at the start of the meeting who will be responsible for taking the notes.

Consideration must always be given as to whether it is in the child's best interests to be invited to attend the meeting. This is to ensure that their wishes and feelings are fully considered and taken in to account in respect of any proposed decisions or actions that will affect them directly, and to ensure we are working in partnership and collaboration with our children and young people. Similar consideration should be given for inviting the child's birth parents or birth family to the meeting. If assessed not to be appropriate to invite the child or young person or their birth family, the rationale for this should be discussed at the meeting and clearly recorded, along with the plan for how their views and input will be sought and considered.

This meeting will consider:

* The influencing factors that could in the future result in the disruption of the home.
* The quality of the child's relationship with the foster carer/residential staff/other children in the home.
* Areas of difficulty.
* How best to support the home, child and carers
* If key documents should be updated (eg risk assessment, individual behaviour support plan, delegated authority, etc.).
* If maintaining to home is in the best interests of the child.
* Actions/solutions for supporting stability.
* Trauma-informed analysis.

**When to call a stability and support meeting.**

A stability and support meeting will be called when a child's home is at risk of disrupting. This could be if:

* Significant concern is raised through the child's or foster carer's review process.
* Where an allegation or complaint has been made.
* The child or young person is absconding or absent from their home on a regular basis.
* The relationship between the child or young person and foster carer/residential provider gives cause for concern.
* The child or young person has indicated that they would prefer to live somewhere else.
* The carers have expressed concerns that they are experiencing difficulties or that they feel they can no longer care for the child or young person.
* The child or young person's social worker or other professional is concerned that the home or carers do not meet the needs of the child or young person.

Where it appears that the home is unstable every effort will be made to resolve the presenting difficulties. This will be in the form of added support to address the issues of concern. In many instances, this will be sufficient to resolve the concerns.

**Requesting and recording a stability and support meeting.**

The allocated social worker will make the request directly to their team manager. The manager will consider the request and if it is not appropriate to hold a stability and support meeting, the rationale for this will be provided and alternative actions agreed. For children and young people living in 'in-house' homes, the children's team manager will liaise directly with the Support to Permanence team manager or Registered Manager to agree a date for the meeting and to confirm who is best placed to chair the meeting. For children and young people living in agency homes, the children's team manager will contact the agency team manager to confirm a date and attendance. The meeting should be held within five working days, and the meeting notes distributed five working days following.

A stability and support meeting should be recorded on the child's record on a generic meeting document form (from the forms tab). A case note of the type "Stability and Support Meeting" should be completed to evidence that the meeting was held, to signpost to the full meeting notes, and to indicate any urgent actions or agreements.

The generic meeting document notes should follow the below format:

* Attendees/apologies.
* Reason for the meeting and purpose of the meeting.
* Background information.
* Matching considerations.
* Current issues and worries.
* Information from partner agencies.
* Support offered so far and effectiveness of this.
* Child's views, carers views and birth family's views.
* Summary and trauma-informed analysis.
* Actions including timescales and lead professionals.
* Review date.

**Disruption Meeting**

A disruption meeting is held when a child or young person's Lasting Home breaks down. This is held no sooner than 28 days and no later the 42 days of the home ending (this includes in-house and agency fostering and residential homes and connected carers) and is chaired by an IRO who has not previously been involved in the child or carers. Any requests received after day 42 will need to be discussed between the Team Manager and duty Quality and Review manager to agree whether to proceed with a disruption meeting.

The purpose of a disruption meeting is to explore and reflect on the journey of the child or young person and the carers to understand the events leading to the disruption and learn lessons from what occurred. This will:

* Help the child or young person by understanding their needs and views better.
* Improve practice by understanding what worked well and what did not work well.
* Recognise all the positive work and good experiences for the child amongst all the difficulties.
* Support everyone and help them carry on and recover and help to repair damaged relationships and support ongoing Life Story work.
* Demonstrate that disruption is never the fault of one or two people or the result of a single factor; it is invariably the outcome of a series of connected factors.
* Identify any changes to matching criteria for the carers or home.
* Enable the agency to address any learning that may be agency-wide and any policies or practices that require amending.

Please note: The disruption meeting is not a planning meeting but is an opportunity to review the past as a preparation for the child's future. Future planning should occur within the child's Looked After Review.

To understand the journey of the child or young person, it is necessary for the meeting to consider their history and previous experiences of parenting, previous homes and moves, and any relationships in their life. The child's or young person's wishes and feelings will be central in this process. A crucial stage to look at is the matching completed for the Lasting Home process - i.e., the assessment of the child's needs at the time of seeking to ratify the home as their Lasting Home, to see how accurately these were communicated and understood at the time and the assessment of what the foster carers or residential home could offer and the support they were given in understanding and providing for the child's needs.

If any learning points are identified for the foster carers, residential home, children's team, family or any other agency/professional, appropriate actions and recommendations will be identified within the disruption meeting, and could include direct work, training, or resource provision. If relevant, lessons learnt following a disruption will be considered in the carer's annual fostering review.

A Practice Development Manager (PDM) from the Permanence Service will attend the disruption meeting and record the reflective learning. The PDM will consider whether it is appropriate to offer any support or learning to the social worker/team involved; the PDM will discuss this with the relevant team manager.

The PDM's will collate all disruption meeting reflective logs over the quarter to enable an analysis report to be developed. The analysis report will look at any themes or trends e.g., age of child, geography, fostering agency, length of time in home, length of time from ratification and will share learning across Children's Social Care teams. At monthly PACT (performance, audit, challenge and track) meetings held in April (Q1), July (Q2), October (Q3), January (Q4) the PDM will present the analysis report, highlight the relevant learning, and agree the plan of support they intend to offer the in response. Countywide learning will be shared via the PDM team and the Principal Social Worker.

**Requesting and recording a disruption meeting.**

A disruption meeting should be requested at the earliest opportunity by completing the Disruption Meeting request form and emailing Safeguarding Conference Request. [SafeguardingConferenceRequest@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:SafeguardingConferenceRequest@lancashire.gov.uk). The request can be made either by the child's social worker or the supervising social worker.

**NB:** **The request can be made as soon as the home disrupts, there is no requirement to wait until day 28 to request the meeting.**



Those invited, or asked to contribute, should be:

1. The child (depending on age and development needs).
2. The parents/birth family.
3. The child's social worker and manager.
4. The link worker/keyworker (for residential care) and home manager.
5. The foster carer(s) and supervising social worker.
6. The child's Independent Reviewing Officer.
7. The child's current carers.
8. Other relevant staff/professionals, including a representative from ART if appropriate or the social workers for other children in the home.
9. Practice Development Manager – to take reflective notes and capture learning.

The child's social worker is responsible for organising the meeting, the venue, and invitations to the meeting. The child's social worker is responsible for ascertaining the child's views and sharing these with the chair.

If appropriate, the IRO chairing the meeting may decide to run a 'series of meetings'. This would be considered in certain circumstances, for example, if the child or young person wants to attend the meeting but the relationship with the previous carers means this could be emotionally harmful or traumatic, a series of meetings could support the contribution and election of all.

The child's social worker and the supervising social worker or residential worker should complete their disruption reports ten working days prior to the disruption meeting. The chair of the disruption meeting is then responsible for sharing these reports in advance of the meeting.



The supervising social worker is responsible for providing the foster carers with the carer's guidance and for sharing any written information provided by the foster carer.

The meeting will ensure the child (depending on age and level of understanding) is given the opportunity to understand the reasons for and be supported with managing the transition.

Where appropriate, foster carers must be supported to maintain links with children who leave their care.

The precise agenda will depend on the child/circumstances, but the chairperson should ensure the circumstances leading to the disruption are properly reviewed, and that all concerned are provided with opportunities to express their views freely with a view to establishing:

* How and why the emergency/disruption occurred, and the impact of the stability and support meeting.
* To learn from what happened and avoid the same thing happening again - for the child or others in the home.
* To contribute to the future planning for the child.
* To identify work to be done and to ensure it is completed.
* To ensure that appropriate notifications and other post transition arrangements have been undertaken.



Disruption meetings can involve a high level of emotional complexity and distress for everyone involved including professionals. The chair needs to demonstrate careful and sensitive planning to incorporate the views of everyone involved. Consideration should be given to inviting some parties to attend part of the meeting, for example, if the child or birth parents wish to attend, as well as whether some information should be confidential (e.g., carer's personal circumstances).

Rather than formal meeting minutes, a reflective learning log will be completed.

If significant concerns are identified in relation to the disruption of an external residential home, consideration should be given to further use of this home and provider by the authority.

If significant concerns are identified in relation to the disruption of a permanent foster home, where the foster carers are in-house approved carers, consideration should be given to holding an early foster carer review to consider the foster carer's approval.

A Looked After Review should also be convened. The allocated IRO must review the reflective learning from the disruption meeting and track any actions agreed as part of the review process.

A disruption meeting should be recorded on the child's record on a generic meeting document form (from the forms tab). A case note of the type "Disruption Meeting" should be completed to evidence that the meeting was held, to signpost to the full meeting notes, and to indicate any urgent actions or agreements.