**Placement Stability and Disruption Meetings**

**Placement Stability Meeting**

**Purpose**

A placement stability meeting is an early intervention mechanism designed to act on concerns of social workers or other professionals involved with a child before a placement breaks down in order to remedy the situation and resolve problems in the interests of the child. Social workers should arrange a stability meeting if they identify any sign of difficulty affecting the child, carer or agency which could in the future lead to disruption.

Placement stability is an important factor for children and is monitored by Ofsted. Placement stability offers children and young people living away from their birth parents the best chance to thrive, and grow in a secure, stimulating and consistent environment.

Placement stability meetings should be convened where foster placements or residential placements, in house or agency, which are otherwise considered to be suitable for a child are at risk of breaking down. They should be called only after other options such as informal meetings between workers and carers have been exhausted or produced no noticeable improvement in the quality of the child's placement.

**Difference between stability meeting and disruption meeting**

A stability meeting should be held as a preventative measure in an attempt to prevent the placement breaking down and when all other forms of support, networking or consultation have not reduced the risk of the possible placement breakdown.

A disruption meeting takes place once a permanent placement has ended abruptly or on an unplanned basis (this includes in-house and agency fostering and residential placements). The aim of this meeting is to reflect on the learning from the placement 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, independent reviewing officer (IRO), or any other worker involved with a looked after child, eg health or education professionals, believes that a placement which is otherwise in the child's best interests, is at risk of breakdown, he/she should consult with their direct line manager, and if it is felt appropriate, ask the child's social worker to request a placement stability meeting is held.

The meeting should be arranged within 5 working days of an issue being raised/identified. For in house placements, the meeting should be chaired by a fostering/residential team manager. For agency placements, the meeting should be chaired by the social worker’s team manager.

The meeting can be called at any stage of the child's placement and can be triggered if there is a concern that the child may be about to experience an unplanned move. The meeting should include the carers/residential key worker, their supervising social worker, the child's social worker, their manager, and any other professional (e.g. teacher/ therapist) who has a direct input to the placement. This may also include the IRO where this would be helpful.

All placement stability meetings must be formally noted/minuted, recording the key issues of concern, and actions/decisions identified at the meeting, with names of workers allocated tasks, timescales for tasks to be completed, and identifying how all parties will evaluate when desired outcomes have been achieved. The minutes will be circulated to all attendees and any other parties who need to be updated on the plan for the child, and always including the foster carer and supervising social worker or residential workers.

Consideration must always be given as to whether it is also in the child's best interests, and appropriate, 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 that will affect them directly.

All attendees must be well prepared to attend the meeting so that they are able to contribute appropriately and secure the best possible outcome.

This meeting will consider:

* The influencing factors that could in the future result in the disruption of the placement
* The quality of the child's relationship with the foster carer/residential staff
* Areas of difficulty
* How best to support the placement to prevent breakdown
* If continuing the placement is considered to be in the best interests of the child
* Actions/solutions for maintaining placement stability

**When to call a Placement Stability Meeting**

A placement stability meeting will be called when a placement is considered to be at risk of disrupting. This could be if:

* Concern is raised through the child's, foster carer's or placement review process
* Where an allegation or complaint has been made
* The child or young person is absconding or being absent from placement on a regular basis
* The relationship between the child and foster carer/residential provider gives cause for concern that the placement may breakdown
* The child or young person has made it known that they want the placement to end
* 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 professionals raise cause for concern that the placement does not meet the needs of the child or young person
* Where it appears that the placement 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 cases, this will be sufficient to resolve the concerns

It will always be the aim of the "in house" fostering service, agency fostering providers and residential providers, in conjunction with the child's social work team, to make every effort to prevent the disruption of a placement.

**Requesting a placement stability meeting.**

Practice manager emails Team manager to request a stability meeting, this request should include the SW report.



Team manager considers the request, if not appropriate will provide the reason, if appropriate meeting details will be confirmed to take place within 5 working days.

Chairs report will be completed within 5 working days of the meeting



The document

**A** **case note is to be recorded on the child's LCS record using the case note type of Placement stability meeting and a copy of the minutes and the reports should be saved to documentum.**

**Placement Disruption Meeting**

A placement disruption meeting is held when a permanent placement disrupts. This is held no sooner than 28 days and no later the 42 days of the placement ending (this includes in-house and agency fostering and residential placements) and is chaired by an IRO who has not previously been involved in the case.

The purpose of a disruption meeting is to examine the progress of the placement in order to understand the sequence of events leading to the disruption and learn lessons from what occurred. This will:

* Help the child by understanding his or her needs better;
* Improve practice by understanding what went wrong;
* Recognise all the positive work and good experiences for the child amongst all the difficulties;
* Support everyone and help them carry on and recover;
* 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 whole series of connected factors;
* Factors that may require to be taken into account prior to any future placement with the carers;
* Enable this Agency to address any learning that may be agency-wide and any policies or practices that require to be amended.

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.

In order to understand the course of the placement, it is necessary for the meeting to consider the child's history and experiences of parenting the child has received, previous placement moves and any relationships in the child's life. The child's wishes and feelings will be central in this process. A crucial stage to look at is the matching process - i.e. the assessment of the child's needs at the time of seeking the placement to see how accurately these were communicated and understood at the time and the assessment of what the foster carers could offer and the support they were given in understanding and providing for the child's needs. The meeting will also look at the child's introduction to the placement and any other issues relating to the placement.

If the responsibility for the disruption is considered to lay with the foster carer/residential service and their response to the child, a structured plan of work to improve responses to children will be formulated along with an appropriate training programme. In these circumstances, the issues regarding the foster carer should be considered in a foster carer review. In the case of serious concerns, following the review the circumstances will be presented to the next available fostering panel.

Children's Social Care need to request a Disruption Meeting at the earliest opportunity by completing the Disruption Meeting request form (form attached) and emailing Safeguarding Conference Request. SafeguardingConferenceRequest@lancashire.gov.uk



Those invited, or asked to contribute, should be:

1. The child (depending on age and development needs);
2. The parents;
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.
9. Minute taker

The child's social worker is responsible for organising the minute taker, 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.

The child's social worker and the supervising social worker / residential worker must 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 allowing reading time at the start 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 his or her 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 placement stability meeting
* To learn from what happened and avoid the same thing happening again - for the child or others in the placement
* 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 placement 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.

The minutes of the meeting are approved by the chair and then circulated to all parties.

In relation to the disruption of an external residential placement, consideration needs to be given to further use of the resource by the authority.

In relation to the disruption of a permanent foster placement, where the foster carers are in-house approved carers, consideration should be given to holding an early foster farer review to consider the foster carer's approval.

A Looked After Review should also be convened.

**A case note is to be recorded on the child's LCS record using the case note type of Placement disruption meeting. The minutes and reports of the disruption meeting should be saved to documentum**

The minutes and reports should also be presented to the locality permanence panel within two months of the meeting to consider any learning in the localities. SIA central/county meeting will be held once every three months to share the themes from all of the disruptions meetings held within that period and consider countywide learning.