

**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**PERMANENCE PANEL AND PERMANENCE PLANNING TRACKING MEETINGS**

**1. Introduction**

The Permanence Panel and Permanence Planning Tracking Meetings operate in the context of national guidance which emphasises the importance of planning for each child who is accommodated by the Local Authority. It is crucial that a plan is made for their future at the earliest opportunity and that this plan is carried through at pace to avoid drift and delay for a child.

The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations sets out the clear expectation that Local Authorities should (where necessary) secure permanent care arrangements for the children in its care. This has been strengthened in the revised regulations where achieving Permanence for every child must be a key consideration from the day a child becomes [Looked After](http://trixresources.proceduresonline.com/nat_key/keywords/looked_after.html) (Care Planning Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010).

The legislative and procedural context provides for professional actions which will promote better outcomes for children weighing all of the options for them, including by engaging with extended families and friends networks, considering private and public law options which will move towards permanency for children within the timescale of the child.

**2. Permanence Panel**

**2.1 Purpose and Intended Outcomes**

The Permanence Panel is an internal decision making and scrutiny body established to achieve improved outcomes for children by:

* Considering each child within 6 weeks of entry into care or after care proceedings have been issued if children remain at home with parents, to ensure that parallel planning takes place effectively
* Ensure that social workers and their managers understand expectations and work towards agreed timescales so children’s plan are progressed at pace
* Ensure that permanence plans for children on full care orders are progressed in a timely way
* Ensure that the use of s20 is monitored effectively
* Ensure the application of consistent practice across all teams in decisions regarding children

**2.2 Main Activity**

The Panel will address the following key issues:

* Ensure permanence planning arrangements are considered at the earliest opportunity for children who have become looked after
* Provide advice on the options available for permanence, to ensure that all possible options are considered and to ensure parallel plans are put in place to avoid delay and drift
* To ensure assessments of parents, connected carers and adoptive parents are being progressed to avoid delay
* To ensure plans for children on full care orders are monitored and progressed in a timely way
* To monitor any disruptions in long term placements to ensure management oversight
* Ensure senior management oversight and scrutiny of cases
* Provide feedback within Children and Young People's Service and across the partnership regarding example of good practice and also in cases where practice and multi-agency working needs to be improved;

**2.3 Protocol and Function of Permanence Panel**

* All children must be referred to Permanence Panel following the first lac review after entry into care by booking with the Business Support Officer for the Panel
* Children whose long term permanence plan needs ratification or changing by the Panel should be booked in at the earliest opportunity after the lac review which agreed the plan
* Children whose placement disrupts having been agreed as permanent should be booked in to the earliest available Panel for discussion and review
* Permanence paperwork must be quality assured by the Team Manager and submitted to the Business Support Officer at least 3 days before the Panel date
* The Business Support Officer will circulate the papers to Panel members, finalise and circulate the agenda as well as notify Team Managers and social workers when their cases will be discussed/reviewed and they are required to attend
* The Team Manager and social worker will attend at their allocated time on the Panel agenda
* If prior to final orders, Permanence Panel will agree the process for monitoring during proceedings
* If full care orders are in place, Panel will agree timescales for any matching reports and for continued monitoring until permanence is agreed
* The Chair of the Panel will be responsible (directly or by identifying the relevant person to do so) for taking forward identified patterns and trends and practice concerns to the relevant service areas and partner agencies;
* The Business Support Officer will complete the Record of the Panel Meeting on FWi and circulate it to the allocated Social Worker and Team Manager. This is to be done within 5 days.

**2.4 Frequency of Permanence Panel**

Panel will occur every 2 weeks on a Tuesday morning.

**2.5 Membership**

Panel membership will comprise:

* Chair – Group Manager, Children in Care
* Group Manager Adoption and Fostering
* Operational Manager, IRO Service
* Business Support Officer.

The social worker and the relevant Team Manager will attend for each case submitted to the Panel.

**2.6 Panel Administration and Information Governance**

Panel members with read all documentation in advance of the panel meeting.

Panel attendees should be prepared to briefly present the case to the panel and be able to provide all relevant information regarding any proposed plan for the child.

The Business Support Officer will maintain a spreadsheet (tracker) of all key Panel decisions.

Minutes of the discussion, including panel decisions will be provided to the social worker and team manager within 5 working days of the panel meeting and will be recorded on the child’s social care FWi file.

The Panel will produce quarterly highlight reports and an annual report for presentation to the senior leadership team in Children's Services.

**3. Permanence Planning Tracking Meetings**

**3.1 Purpose and Intended Outcomes**

* Monitoring cases going through proceedings to ensure plans for children are progressed in a timely way and parallel plans are in place so there is no delay for children
* Monitoring cases on full care orders to ensure children’s plan are progressed and permanence is achieved at the earliest opportunity
* Analysing patterns and trends in order to ensure best practice; inform commissioning intentions and trigger responses from relevant service areas and partner agencies regarding identified practice concerns;
* Reducing delays in planning for children and helping to promote early permanence decisions for children.

**3.2 Main Activity**

The Permanence Planning Tracking Meetings will address the following key issues:

* Regularly review cases where proceedings have been issued to ensure that plans progress in a timely manner and to ensure that parallel plans are in place to avoid drift
* Regularly review cases where full care orders have been granted to ensure that plans are progressed without delay and permanence is agreed at the earliest opportunity

**3.4 Protocol and Function of Permanence Planning Tracking Meetings**

* The Business Support Officer will support the Team managers in arranging the Permanence Planning Tracking Meetings in order to ensure good coordination and all relevant professionals (IRO, adoption Sw, Supervising social worker) invited;
* The allocated social worker must complete the permanence paperwork, two days before the Permanence Planning Tracking meeting is held;
* The meeting will focus on the assessed needs of the child in relation to their emotional, physical, social, cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious needs as well as proposed contact plans;
* Formulate a profile of the child’s needs and match these against the proposed placements;
* Develop a suitable Support Plan to contribute to the success and sustainability of the placement;
* Ensure the child’s wishes are duly considered within the meeting;
* Review the possible permanency options, with a view to agreeing one plan or several plans to be progressed concurrently;
* Identify what needs to be done to achieve the chosen plan/s and agree who will do what and by when;
* Track, monitor and advise upon direct work with child, including Life Story work /preparation and transition work;
* Where there are differences of opinion between involved professionals the meeting should clarify these and identify a process for resolution. Where it is necessary for a senior management decision to be sought the meeting should identify the available options and the strengths and risks of each option considered;
* At the Permanence Planning Tracking Meetings social workers will be asked the following: Assessment Analysis, including the impact of any harm the child has experienced; Assessments to be undertaken; Contact arrangements; Legal timetable; Current Care Plan Parallel Plan Considerations for family finding;
* The Team Manager will be responsible (directly or by identifying the relevant person to do so) for taking forward identified patterns and trends and practice concerns to the relevant service areas and partner agencies;
* Following discussion, the Business Support Officer will update the FWI records within 5 working days, will update the Tracking Tools, will book the next agreed Permanence Planning Tracking meeting and will invite all relevant professionals.

**3.5 Frequency of Permanence Planning Tracking Meetings**

* Where care proceedings are in place, Permanence Planning Tracking Meetings will occur every **6 weeks** on a specific day of the week agreed by the team manager.
* Where the children are subject to Placement orders, Permanence Planning Tracking Meetings will occur every **6 weeks** in order to ensure drift and delay in family finding and achieving permanence is avoided.
* Where the children are subject to Care orders and have been in placement for less than 12 months, Permanence Planning Tracking Meetings will occur every **12 weeks**.
* Robust tracking of issues will assist with mitigating any risk of drift and delay to securing permanency for children.

**3.6 Membership**

Permanence Planning Tracking Meetings will be attended by:

* Chair – Children in Care team manager
* Child’s allocated social worker
* Connected carer social worker where applicable
* Family finder, where applicable
* Supervising Social worker
* Other involved professionals where appropriate. The IRO’s views are to be sought prior to the meeting if unable to attend
* Business Support Officer.

**3.7 Permanence Planning Tracking Meetings** **Administration and Information Governance**

Permanence Planning Tracking Meetings attendees with read all documentation in advance of the meeting.

Permanence Planning Tracking Meetings attendees should be prepared to briefly present the case and be able to provide all relevant information regarding any proposed plan for the child.

The Business Support Officer will maintain a spreadsheet (tracker) of all key meeting decisions (Permanence planning Tracking review, present at Permanency panel, no further review needed).

Minutes of the discussion and decisions will be recorded on the child’s social care FWi file within 5 working days of the meeting.

The respective Team managers will produce quarterly highlight reports and an annual report for presentation to the senior leadership team in Children in care service.

**4. Review Arrangements**

The Permanence Panel and Permanence Planning Tracking Meetings will be reviewed on an annual basis.