**In care proceedings**

Parallel planning is where a return home is being assessed whilst plans for permanence away from the birth parent(s) are also developed to avoid subsequent delay. It is essential that every effort is made to minimise drift and delay in care proceedings by adhering to the 26 week Court time frame.

It is important to avoid numerous independent parenting assessments, expert assessments, particularly when your evidence already suggests that the parent is not able to make the change required.

**Section 20**

A child or young person who comes into care with the agreement of their parents is at much higher risk of permanency not being secured in a timely way. It will be the responsibility of you and your managers to make sure that the time scale is adhered to.

New legislation requires that a decision to return a child home should not be undertaken without a detailed [**Children and Families Assessment**](http://trixresources.proceduresonline.com/nat_key/keywords/assessment.html) **and DBS checks** on household members. An existing assessment should be updated where necessary. Where a child under 16 has been looked after for more than 20 days, agreement has to be sought from your Service Manager, and your Assistant Director must be notified.

**Young people aged 16 or 17 and accommodated under Section 20 must have a decision to return home approved by your Assistant Director.**

You must consider whether the proposed arrangements for the child’s accommodation and maintenance when they cease to be looked-after are suitable, and what services and support the child and the parent(s) might need when they cease to be looked-after.

You must speak to or otherwise ascertain the child’s wishes and feelings about the proposed plan for their care when they are no longer looked-after**.**

The plan to return the child or young person back to the birth family on a permanent basis must be monitored by you, your team manager, and the allocated Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO).

If by the second statutory Child in Care Review the child or young person has not returned home, the IRO must consider whether the plan is still viable and realistic. If the child or young person did not return home due to drift and delay in social work practice and decision making, it is essential that the child’s social worker and team manager discusses the case with your Service Manager and the IRO to agree a way forward.

The issue resolution process may be triggered. If the issues are not resolved within 20 working days, and then the Assistant Director will discuss the case with the Service Manager and ensure that the required actions are delivered within the agreed time scales.

**Tackling drift and delay is a shared responsibility and it is essential that such issues are not addressed only through emails, but should be resolved through face to face meetings.**

If at any point following the first Statutory Review, it becomes clear that the Care Plan to reunify the child or young person to the birth family is not a viable option, and the child requires permanency through another option, a statutory review should be set up by the child’s social worker to agree revision to the Care Plan.

**Geoff Gurney**

**Interim Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting**

**July 2015**

**Email me if you found this procedure in a nutshell helpful.**