**Promoting Stable Homes for Children in care (Placement Stability) Practice Guidance and Checklist **

**Name of Author: Sarah Jenner**

**Name of Senior Manager Approving: Hayley Bodiam**

**Date of Issue: August 2023**

**Date to be Reviewed: August 2024**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Contents | Page |
| [Purpose](#_Purpose) | 3 |
| [Definition of Placement Stability](#_Definitions) | 3 |
| [Importance of Placement Stability](#_The_Importance_of) | 4 |
| [Reasons for Placement Instability](#_Reasons_for_Placement) | 4 |
| [Tools and Processes to Support Placement Stability](#_Tools_and_Processes)  | 5 |
| [Sense of Belonging](#_Sense_of_Belonging) | 6 |
| [Lifelong Links](#_Lifelong_Links) | 7 |
| [Purposeful Visiting Forms](#_Purposeful_Visiting_Forms) | 8 |
| [Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire](#_Strengths_and_Difficulties) | 9 |
| [Placement Stability Checklist](#_Placement_Stability_Checklist) | 10 |
| [Placement Stability Meetings: Multi-agency planning to address identified placement fragility](#_Placement_Stability_Meetings) | 11 |
| [Top Tips for Tackling Placement Instability](#_Top_Tips_for) | 17 |
| [Additional Resources](#_Additional_resources) | 18 |
| [Appendix 1 Sense of Belonging Referral Form](#_Appendix_1_Sense) | 19 |
| [Appendix 2 Placement Stability Checklist](#_Example_-_Placement) | 21 |

# **Purpose**

This document explores the meaning of placement stability, sets out the impact of placement instability on children and the importance of Kent’s approach to ensuring that placement stability is a priority for children in our care.

It is important to remember that when talking about placements we are talking about children and young people’s homes. Therefore, wherever possible through the guidance this is reflected by talking about children’s homes, rather than placements. However, it is acknowledged that the term ‘placement’ is commonly used in policy and for the purposes of clarity will still be referred to in this guidance.

This practice guidance will provide tools to be used to identify potential placement fragility early to support practitioners put measures in place to promote stability and the continuation of the home, where this is in the child’s best interests.

# **Definitions**

**Placement Stability**

Philip Heslop (Community Care Inform, February 2020) explains that in relation to Children in Care, “Placement stability is about providing a child or young person with a homelife that provides security, belonging and consistency until adulthood. Careful matching between the child and the placement is the first step in achieving stability”.

**Placement Instability**

The Department for Education defines placement instability in terms of the number of placement moves experienced by children, with high as 3 or more placement moves in a year ([Children looked after in England including adoptions, Reporting year 2022- Explore statistics](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoptions)).

Placements ending in an unplanned way and placement disruption are not the same but these terms are used interchangeably sometimes and are often associated with frequency of placement moves for children.

**Placement disruption** is used to describe a placement ending that was not part of the Child in Care’s Plan, either in the ending itself or in the timing of the termination.

**Placements ending in an unplanned way (also known as breakdowns)** are defined as those placements for children or young people that do not last as long as planned. Placement moves are planned.

# **The Importance of placement stability**

Safe, secure, stable and consistent care are the foundations of a child’s physical, emotional and psychological development.

When children experience stability of good quality care that meets their needs, they are more able to feel safe, flourish and achieve their potential, as this is because it is the most likely situation to promote consistency and high-quality emotional relationships, predictability in routine and continuity of access to services.

Reducing the number of children who experience their care provision ending and increasing the proportion of children in our care remaining in a stable home will increase the likelihood of positive outcomes into adulthood. Positive outcomes include better educational attainment, improved physical health and mental health, better self-reporting of a sense of well-being and happiness by children, and more successful transitions to adulthood.

The consequences and impact of experiencing multiple moves of home can be significant and long lasting for children. Unplanned moves can lead to emotional trauma and instability, feelings of loss, and fracturing of relationships, with the result that further placement moves are more likely. Adjusting to a new environment with new rules and developing new secure relationships are difficult and can lead to a disruption of education and support services, exacerbating any existing behavioural and emotional difficulties. The cyclical nature of lack of secure and trusting relationships impacts on self-worth, friendships, support, and compounds all the issues leading to further placement moves.

# **Reasons for Placement Instability**

The reasons for placement instability can be complex. In November 2022, the Safeguarding, Professional Standards and Quality Assurance Unit undertook an audit of young people who had experienced 3 or more placement moves and identified 9 key risk factors predicting placement breakdown:

* Unplanned placement moves
* Reduced timetable/ poor attendance/ exclusions
* Missing episodes
* Open to Youth Justice
* Substance misuse
* Recent social worker changes
* Non-permanent placements
* Medium – high SDQ scores

In addition, it was found that a combination of risk factors including school exclusions, EHCP’s for social/emotional difficulties, self-harming or suicidal ideation and violence or aggression to others, are particularly likely to cause placement fragility and possible breakdowns.

As well as child related factors that may impact on placement stability consideration needs to be given to circumstances within the foster carer’s life too. How carers can be supported both through their informal support networks and more formal professional support is an important protective factor against the risk predictors identified.

It may also be important to consider if the contributing factors to instability are short term and likely to pass, or if the issue indicate a longer-term vulnerability.

# **Tools and Processes to Support Home Stability**

## Assessment considerations –

A good assessment of a child’s needs, anticipating the developmental needs of a child can help placement stability. The assessment should be ongoing and change and adapt to a child over time, thereby pre-empting the support needed as the child develops to adulthood.

## Matching -

Careful matching between the needs of the child and the ability of the carers to meet those needs is the first step to achieving stability. Realistic expectations of foster carers, particularly their capacity, is essential to longevity when considering placement planning. Placement availability can lead to matches which are not as suitable. When this is the case, this should be acknowledged from the start of placement, suitable support given, clear communication and reassurance with the child that a more suitable placement search is underway and ensure a new Placement Plan is completed to initiate a new search immediately.

## Placement Arrangement Meetings -

To make these meetings effective, it is good practice to hold a meeting before the child is placed, as set out in the [Placement in Foster Care Procedure](https://kentchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_place_fost_care.html) and the [Placement in Residential Care Procedure](https://kentchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_place_resi_care.html). This is the first opportunity to discuss the child’s needs in full and what is required to help both the child and carer to ensure placement stability moving forward.When it’s not possible to hold it before, the Placement Arrangement Meeting should be held within 5 days of placement starting and potential factors that could jeopardise placement stability should be discussed.

## Use of chronologies -

A chronology is a tool for professionals and families to understand the history and events which have led to the present time, giving insight into relevant patterns.

It is important to use chronologies specific to a child’s experiences and previous placements to support understanding and improve placement stability in the future.

## Support services -

A key issue can be the complexity of a child’s needs, often resulting from their experiences of trauma and the various ways this can manifest itself. It is vital that carers are given full information about a child’s history and experiences, training and support to manage this, and there is a clear open dialogue and effective planning. Support can be in various forms but needs to be planned in a timely way.

# Sense of Belonging -

The Kent Fostering Service provide additional support for their most vulnerable fostering placements, where additional pressures upon the foster carers mean there is a higher risk of a placement breakdown. Referrals are for children placed with in house providers.

The criteria for accessing this additional package is based on:

* Children/young people who have had 3 plus placement moves in the last year
* Children/young people out of education or excluded
* Children/young people on a part time timetable
* Children/young people at risk of missing/CSE
* Placements assessed at risk of breakdown where the package is identified as a support to maintain the placement at the stability core group. This is not just placements identified at risk of breakdown by the Placement Stability Checklist.
* For children with complex needs coming from a previous placement breakdown, including IFA’s.

The aim of the service is to intervene at the earliest possible opportunity to prevent an escalation of any difficulties, support children and young people’s emotional needs and support foster carers and professionals understand the meaning of the child/young person’s behaviour. Consider strategies for managing the behaviour and sustaining the relationships within the placement.

The service takes a mentalization-based approach to support teams and foster carers to develop a mentalizing stance towards caring for children and young people. This means working with the thoughts, feelings and intentions behind behaviour and seeing how this understanding can strengthen relationships and reduce stress.

The service support carers develop their network, keeping a focus on the importance of foster carer well-being and the ways in which this can support the placement and maintain relationships. There is evidence that bringing a mentalizing focus to foster carers increases their sense of competence and leads to greater stability of placements.

Completed referral forms are sent to Sense of Belonging Referrals - CY

# Lifelong Links -

Lifelong Links is provided by the Social Connections service in Kent to help find and bring together people who care about the young person to connect them to their family members and family history to support their identity.

This is important as children and young people want to know where they come from, who they look like in their family, how big their family tree is, and their family history. Enabling children to have this information can promote placement stability.

Research from the Family Rights Group [Impact of Lifelong Links - Family Rights Group](https://frg.org.uk/lifelong-links/impact-of-lifelong-links/) (April 2022) has shown that if a young person has Life Long Links work it can help them settle in their home. For example, that 74% children and young people remained in their placement after Lifelong Links compared with 41% of a comparator group.

Lifelong Links can support children, young people and their carers to ensure that reconnecting with family members is undertaken in a safe and supportive way.

This could be people they know, people they have not seen for a while and even relatives they have not met yet.

It is a child led process offered to children or young people who are in care with no current option or plan to return home. Lifelong Links is not Life Story work, it is about exploring how people can support the young person now and into their adult life.

Lifelong Links can support young people who want to connect or reconnect with family, extended family here in the UK or explore connecting with their community, church community, or other faith group. (Where the Red Cross accept referrals, they can help with family finding abroad – if anyone is found, they can be provided with a Family Group Conference).

## Lifelong Links Referral Process

* Social workers can complete a referral on Liberi and send the referral to the Lifelong Links tray. (If child is accommodated under section 20, parents need to give consent for the referral to be made).
* A Lifelong Links Co-ordinator meets with the child and discusses the work. Mapping tools such as genograms or ecomaps may be used to explore the child’s family and friend networks.
* A planning meeting takes place involving the social worker, foster carer, IRO, home manager to discuss what the child or young person would like to achieve and explore any concerns or worries anyone may have about the work and how to manage this, what support is needed, and how to embed any results or outcomes in the care plan.
* The Co-ordinator will do everything they can to find, locate, communicate with those identified by the child. Keeping the young person informed so they can be in control of next steps.
* Outcomes: This is dependent on what the child, wants to get from the process, could be a Family Group Conference, a family book, a family tree.
* The Co-ordinator will work with the foster carer and social worker keeping them informed.

Further information can be found using the following link: [Connect with family through Lifelong Links service](https://www.kent.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/children-in-care/connect-with-family-through-lifelong-links-service)

# Purposeful Visiting Forms -

Purposeful Visiting is a framework to support understanding of a child or young person’s lived experience in a placement. Understanding the environment a child is living in and the quality of the care they are receiving will enable practitioners to challenge providers and consider what additional supports or amendments are required to meet the child’s needs and increase placement stability.

The Purposeful Visiting Form (on Liberi) will ensure that all aspects of the child or young person's care is assessed and is an important tool to be used to ensure that the placements provided to children and young people are safe, suitable and meets their needs. There must be checks and evidence provided by the placement provision which must triangulate with what the child or young person is telling us.

Social Workers and IRO’s are required to complete the Purposeful Visiting Form at various intervals throughout the course of their work.

Social Workers and IRO’s are required to complete the Purposeful Visiting Form for all placements except in-house foster placements, which have their own framework for triangulating information about the placement and how it meets a child’s needs.

Service Managers become involved when the placement is unregistered*.* The Purposeful Visiting Guidance outlines the requirement for Service Managers to visit a child in a new placement that is unregistered within one month of placement and complete the Purposeful Visiting Form. Form *(*[Forms/Practice Guidance*).*](https://kentchildcare.proceduresonline.com/local_resources.html)

Where concerns are noted, the Purposeful Visiting Form can be used to evidence concerns which can be escalated informally by the Social Worker to the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) formally using the escalation process. [Kent Resolution of Professional Disagreement Policy](https://www.proceduresonline.com/kentandmedway/pdfs/res_prof_disagree.pdf?zoom_highlight=escalation#search=%22escalation%22)

# Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires -

This is a widely used tool for assessing a child's emotional wellbeing, looking at the likelihood of problems being already present or those that could develop in the future. All local authorities in England are required to provide information on the psychological and emotional health of children in care, and specifically emotional and behavioural difficulties. This information needs to be collected using a Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire (SDQ).

The SDQ should be completed when a child comes into care and every year that they remain in care between the ages of 4 to 17.

This is aimed at providing a rounded picture of a child or young person and in particular their emotional well-being and will enable decisions to be made about what if any further services they may need to address any difficulties identified.

Timely and consistent use of the SDQ will support the early identification of difficulties and the provision of support which could in turn prevent pressures on placements and avoid placement breakdown.

The flow chart regarding the SDQ process is accessed from the guidance section on KPON [via this link](https://www.proceduresonline.com/trixcms2/media/12599/4_sdq-flowchart-updated.doc).

In addition to the support provided by local authorities, the Adoption Support Fund in England also covers the therapeutic support for children, living in England, who were previously in care immediately before the making of a Special Guardianship Order. [Special Guardianship Orders Guidance](https://kentchildcare.proceduresonline.com/g_spec_guard_ord.html?zoom_highlight=Adoption+Support+Fund)

Based on the assessment of needs, local authorities can apply for funding from the Adoption Support Fund. [Adoption support fund (ASF)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/adoption-support-fund-asf)

# Placement Stability Checklist (form on Liberi)

The earlier risk predictors of placement breakdown can be identified, the sooner the combined skills and resources of the multi-agency network can be harnessed to address the underlying issues and change the trajectory to strengthen the placement.

The earlier the intervention the greater the chance of success, as it can be almost impossible to retrieve or repair relationships at the point that a placement is breaking down.

The Placement Stability Checklist has been developed, (based on statistically significant risk factors) as a tool to proactively identify placements that could be considered fragile or unstable. It is a tool to support analysis and decision-making to be used alongside (not replace) professional judgment. The Placement Stability Checklist is to be completed on Liberi and is found in the forms section.

The checklist is for the Social Worker to complete. However, the IRO or any practitioner could complete this as and when necessary. The Social Worker should complete the checklist at:

1. Start of placement

2. First sign of placement fragility

3. Before each LAC Review

The checklist can also be used to inform discussion in supervision.

The checklist is a tool and is intended to be used flexibly to guide and support decisions about what is needed and what action should be taken to address and reduce the likelihood of placements breaking down. **The scoring should not be rigidly applied as consideration may be given to situations that do not achieve a high score but nonetheless concerns remain, about potential placement fragility and instability.** From this checklist actions will need to be considered to prevent instability or breakdown.

There are twelve identified risk factors.

Each factor has a score of 1 – 4 (1 being the lowest risk, 4 being the highest risk). Appropriate factors are ticked on the sheet.

If the following scores are identified, then a separate Placement Stability Meeting **must** be considered and if not held, a rationale must be recorded clearly on the child’s file:

* 3+ factors have scored a 4.
* 3+ placement moves in the last 12 months.
* A total score of 25 or more across a number of factors.

This checklist can be used to record what has already been done to stabilise the placement and what actions will be undertaken so separate minutes may not be required.

See appendix 2 for copy of checklist.

The Team Manager (*either Social Work Fostering*) or Independent Reviewing Officer following completion of the checklist and score review, will consider if a Placement Stability Meeting is required. It may be sufficient to discuss this as part of the LAC Review/Placement Arrangement Meeting or Permanency Planning Meeting. If sufficient time cannot be allotted to considering placement stability to follow the LAC review. A separate Placement Stability Meeting may be required, or could be combined with a Permanence Planning Meeting. The decision on whether to have a separate Placement Stability Meeting, for it to follow the LAC review or be combined with a Permanence Planning Meeting will be the decision of the chair (depending on type and timing this will be the IRO. Fostering social worker, allocate Team Manager).

# **Placement Stability Meetings**

The stability of a child’s placement can fluctuate and potentially could deteriorate without sensitive consideration from the professional network caring for the child. Therefore, active and regular consideration of placement stability should be a key priority. Placement stability should be considered at Placement Arrangement Meetings, Child in Care Reviews and at separate Placement Stability Meetings if needed. If this does not resolve the worries and a Child in Care review is not due to take place, then a Placement Stability Meeting needs to be arranged.

## Purpose of meeting

If using the Placement Stability Checklist or other issues are raised which indicate that a placement is becoming fragile, it is important to ensure there is good communication to understand what is happening for the child, their carers and the impact upon the placement. This will allow identification of supports and review of the care plan to address issues promptly and put in place alternative support to carers and the child, including respite.

The meeting can also consider the role of the fostering social worker in supporting foster carers.

When worries are raised around the stability of a placement a review of the Placement Arrangement Meeting is necessary to consider alternative ways to support the child and/or foster carer in placement.

The aim of the Placement Stability Meeting to consider the factors that could result in the disruption and breakdown of the placement and how this might be averted. A Placement Stability Meeting can be requested by any professional. The request should be made to either the allocated Social Worker or Fostering Social Worker who will then make arrangements for the meeting to take place.

The IRO should be informed of the need for a meeting immediately and then discussion around who is best placed to chair this meeting.

The objectives of the meeting will be:

* to gain an understanding of the quality of the child/ carer relationship
* to understand areas of difficulty impacting on the stability of the placement
* to create opportunity for the foster carer(s), child/children to discuss the issues or concerns that exist within the placement
* to gain views from other professionals
* to seek commitment and support from the professional network on how they will provide the support necessary to maintain the placement.

The outcome of the meeting is to have a plan of action to address the risk factors identified. This will be in the form of considering ways to support the carers to manage issues in relation to the child thinking about his/her placement and strategies that could be implemented to stabilise the placement. This could also include considering additional support to address any concerns. Where a resolution to avoid placement breakdown can be achieved, a plan will be formulated. This will highlight the difficulties in the placement to date and set specific SMART actions to maintain placement stability. Where necessary, a review Placement Stability Meeting will be required so as to measure impact and consider if further actions are required to be taken.

## Timescale

A Placement Stability Meeting should take place immediately following the identification of potential fragility, and within five working days, in order to put in place a robust plan to identify and address any concerns and increase stability.

A Placement Stability Meeting must take place immediately following moving a child or young person to a placement where issues with the match with the placement have been identified.

## Chairing a Placement Stability Meeting

When a Placement Stability Meeting is convened for a child or young person placed with foster carers the meeting will be chaired by the Fostering Team Manager. The meeting will be arranged by Fostering Service.

When a Placement Stability Meeting is convened for a child or young person in an Independent Fostering Agency placement, residential, regulated/unregulated, or any other type of placements, the meeting will be chaired by the IRO or Child in Care Team Manager. The meeting should be arranged by the allocated social work team.

The key consideration around who chairs the Placement Stability Meeting is who has the capacity *and earliest availability* to ensure that the meeting is convened at the earliest possible opportunity in order to urgently consider the concerns that threaten the stability of a placement and put in place a plan to address these.





If there is any concern that a Placement Stability Meeting is not scheduled to take place in a timely way this should be escalated using the Kent Escalation and Challenge Policy. [Procedures - Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership](https://www.kscmp.org.uk/procedures)

## Attendance at Placement Stability Meeting

The membership of the meeting is likely to differ slightly for each child, depending on their particular circumstances. However, there are certain professionals who would normally attend:

* Advocate for the child
* Foster Carer (or Key Worker if the child is in Residential Care)
* Social Worker
* Fostering Supervising Social Worker
* Personal Adviser (if the young person is over 16)
* Someone who can represent the child’s educational needs, e.g. Class Teacher or Designated Teacher
* Representative from Kent Virtual School Team
* Any therapeutic service actively involved with the child or carers
* Police, where there are appropriate issues

Other attendees may include:

* Attendance of Child or Young Person. It is vital that the child’s voice is heard and their wishes and feelings shared.
* Designated Nurse for Children in Care or any other professionals that are involved in work with the child or young person or if there is a likelihood that a referral will be made.
* Wherever there are concerns that a child may be at risk of offending, or it is known that they have been involved in offending, a representative from the Youth Offending Service should be included.
* Birth parent(s) if it is felt they have a positive contribution to make. The views of the birth parents should always be fed into the meetings.
* Commissioning could be involved, where appropriate through consultation where a child is placed in commissioned placements.

Children and young people should usually be given a choice about attending Placement Stability Meetings but there may be some circumstances where this is not appropriate or in the child’s best interests. By their nature discussions about the fragility of placements and the reasons for this can be particularly challenging, and whilst negative language about a child should be challenged, this may be difficult for a child to hear. Any conscious decision not to include the young person should be recorded, with an explanation of the reason.

Every child should be given the opportunity to give their views. These should be gathered in creative ways to ensure the child’s views are gathered and their voice is heard. There could be a split meeting where the child is present for part of the meeting.

If the child is not present, the social worker must speak to the child after the meeting so they are aware of what was discussed and what will happen.

An Interpreter must be provided if the young person does not understand English as a first language. Appropriate communication where needed, for example picture exchange communication (PECs) could be used for children with communication difficulties to assist in understanding.

Careful consideration should be given to children and young people with SEN/learning, language, or physical disabilities in relation to involvement and the way in which the meeting is held. The chairperson must allow for participation of the child or young person, which is at their speed and level of understanding. Cultural differences, particularly around gender, which may inhibit participation should be assessed and addressed.

## Placement Stability Meeting Agenda

If placement stability is being discussed and addressed within a Child in Care review, then a separate agenda and minutes are not required. The use of the Placement Stability Checklist, discussion and actions should be recorded within the LAC minutes. If a standalone Placement Stability Meeting is convened, the suggested agenda below can be used.

Liaison between professionals should take place as required prior to the Placement Stability Meeting and an agenda agreed alongside any agreement to any additional resources that may be required to be taken to the Access to Resources Panel.

**Placement Stability Meeting agenda**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Welcome and introductions – overview of the purpose of the review meeting.*** Introduction, who is present and their role.
* Apologies received.
* Any information received by professionals/ networks members who are unable to attend.
* Brief overview of reason for the meeting
 |  |
| **Agenda items (other items to be added as appropriate)*** Analysis / identification of presenting problems or triggers
* The needs of the child and what life is like for them (health, education, family time, placement, etc.)
* The child/young person's cultural and identity needs and whether these are being met.
* Outcomes of recent (termly) PEP / CLA review.
* Views of CSW, SSW, IRO and other Professionals including those in health and education
* What is working well for the child and carers?
* Support in place historically and currently
 |  |
| **Views of the Child/Young Person – (see Top Tips from Children about positive meetings** [Top tips from Children about positive meetings](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proceduresonline.com%2Ftrixcms2%2Fmedia%2F18258%2Ftop-tips-from-children-about-positive-meetings.pdf&data=05%7C01%7CJane.Caldwell%40kent.gov.uk%7C77dd6796853d437eeade08db15b6a643%7C3253a20dc7354bfea8b73e6ab37f5f90%7C0%7C0%7C638127646433078382%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=%2FOe%2FSgu%2F7lPF1w8mhL2Mq48dDOR30gdTY5gdWtwBPfo%3D&reserved=0)**)**Children and young people should be told about the meeting, what it involves and asked if they want to attend and options on how to do this, along with ways they can contribute their views to the meeting.  |  |
| **Actions Agreed – SMART planning*** Consideration to referral to NELFT/Sense of Belonging/FGC/ Social Connections Service
* Direct support for the child/young person
* Direct support for the foster carer/provision
* Additional services required and whether request to Access to Resource Panel is required.
* Training or support from Fostering - buddies, peer intervention support, support groups
* Support from other professionals and escalation if service has been denied.
* Timing or review
 |  |
| **Contingency Plans and date and time of next meeting** |  |

**Recording**

Minutes of the Placement Stability Meetings in line with current guidance will have a section within the form/minutes written to the child which summarises the discussion/actions/rationale for decisions, rather than writing the whole document to the child.

# Top Tips for Tackling Placement Instability

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Placement matching including clear expectations of what carers can provide | Adequate matching for child and foster carer provides a foundation for stability and everyone has a clear understanding of what is expected. |
| Timely completion of placement plans | Clear detailed placements plans which outline the child’s needs in a strengths-based and transparent way can provide a strong basis for a stable placement. When a placement is clearly not a good match from the beginning, a new Placement Plan should be completed immediately to start a new placement search. Reassure the child/young person this is being done.  |
| Know and understand the carers and families | Strong relationships and clear communication between the professional network promote placement stability. Open regular dialogue about concerns and issues ensures everyone is aware when there is a problem early enough to act before breakdown. |
| Wherever possible enable children to be involved in decision making | Placements are more stable when children and young people feel invested in their placements and feel their wishes and feelings are listened to and given consideration.  |
| Promote education | Social workers and foster carers should do their utmost to raise academic expectations and encourage school participation, engagement, and attainment. Exclusions and part-time timetables should be challenged and used for the minimum time possible. |
| Use SDQ’s to identify emotional difficulties early on | Early recognition of mental health difficulties and timely evidence-based interventions can go a long way towards alleviating difficulties and building relationships. Services may not always be available but challenge and escalate if you feel a service should be provided. |
| Proactive use of placement stability checklist | The checklist is evidence based and will help support your analysis and knowledge of the child and the suitability of the placement. Early identification of fragility with placement can result in prompt actions and support to increase stability for that child or young person. |
| Consideration of referral to services such as NELFT, Sense of Belonging and Social Connections Service | There are a range of services to support children and young people with their emotional well-being. Timely, targeted and effective support from specialist services can help resolve underlying issues and improve emotional well-being which can result in increased placement stability.  |
| Well-functioning network committed to their corporate parenting responsibilities  | Promoting positive relationships within the child’s network and all professionals recognising their corporate parenting responsibilities will promote placement stability. |
| Being trauma informed | Understanding and responding to a child or young person’s experience of trauma will support increased placement stability. Helping the carers to understand the impact of trauma will improve empathy and patience.  |
| Language | Ensure that language is strengths based/non-blaming and consideration is given to what is working well, and how this can be developed so the focus is not just on the negatives and difficulties. |

# Additional resources

Placement Disruption (6 February 2020): quick guide Community Care Inform

Placement Planning and Disruption Meeting KPON [Placement Planning and Disruption Meetings (Fostering and Adoption)](https://kentchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_place_disrup_meet.html?zoom_highlight=Placement+stability)

Notes about Care Planning Notes on KPON [NB notes – March 2012](https://kentchildcare.proceduresonline.com/files/cp_handbook.pdf?zoom_highlight=stability+core+group#search=%22stability%20core%20group%22)

Kent Foster Carer Handbook [Kent Foster Carer Handbook](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fhandbook.kentfostering.co.uk%2F&data=05%7C01%7CAnita.Hiller%40kent.gov.uk%7C6ad0be609374441fd35808dbaee26753%7C3253a20dc7354bfea8b73e6ab37f5f90%7C0%7C0%7C638296059640083775%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=2MEDbs8CgOLXR4LeUlx9cIxFMJVZScp5nkrPZRfkFnE%3D&reserved=0)

# Appendix 1 Sense of Belonging Referral Form (please contact Sense of Belong for current version)

**Sense of Belonging**

Send to: **senseofbelongingreferrals@kent.gov.uk**

**PLEASE ATTACH** alongside referral an up-to-date genogram and chronology alongside any relevant documents which may support an understanding of current situation.

*To be completed by the referring worker:*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Referrer’s name and role** |  |
| **Date of referral** |  |
| **Child/young person’s name** |  |
| **Child/young person’s DoB** |  |
| **Child/young person’s Liberi number** |  |
| **Foster carers full name** |  |
| **Permanent home address** |  |
| **Contact telephone number** |  |
| **Date of last Stability Core Group** |  |
| **Open to CAMHS?** | Yes/No |
| **Criteria** - If more than one applies please indicate the highest priority 1 being the primary issue, 4 being the least | [ ]  Child/Young person has had 3 plus moves in last 12 months[ ]  At Risk of CSE or Missing [ ]  Excluded from education or on part time timetable [ ]  Placement at risk of immediate breakdown  |
| **Scale of 0 – 10 of the risk of placement breaking down** = No risk 10 = Imminent breakdown/notice given on placement |  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Provide a short summary of the current crisis or situation?** |
|  |
| How do you anticipate the Sense of Belonging Service can support placement stability? |
|  |

## Example - Placement Stability Checklist (this is a Liberi form)

SW/PA to complete at:

1. Start of placement

2. First sign of placement fragility

3. Before each LAC Review

The checklist can also be used to inform discussion in supervision.

**The checklist is a tool and is intended to be used flexibly to guide and support decisions about what is needed and what action should be taken to address and reduce the likelihood of placements breaking down. The scoring should not be rigidly applied as consideration may be given to situations that do not achieve a high score but nonetheless concerns remain, about potential placement fragility and instability. Consideration about what actions need to be taken to identify any fragility or potential fragility and ensure placements remain stable take place at all times.**

Each factor has a score of 1 – 4 (1 being the lowest risk, 4 being the highest risk). Tick appropriate factors on the sheet.

TM/IRO will consider if Placement Stability Meeting is required. It may be sufficient to discuss this as part of the LAC Review/ Placement Planning Meeting. If sufficient time can be allotted to considering placement stability, so a separate Placement Stability Meeting may not always be required.

If the following are identified, then a separate Placement Stability Meeting must be considered:

* 3+ factors have scored a 4
* 3+ placement moves in the last 12 months
* A total of 25 or more across a number of factors, a separate Placement Stability Meeting must be considered, and if not held, a rationale given as to why must be recorded clearly on the child’s file.

This checklist can be used to record what has already been done to stabilise the placement and what actions will be undertaken so separate minutes may not be required.

Child’s Name:
Liberi Number:
Today’s Date:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Risk Score from 1-4** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | What has been done to stabilise the placement  | Action (what, when, who) |
| **AGE**  | Under 11 [ ]  | 11-13 [ ]  | 17+ [ ]  | 14-16 [ ]  |  |  |
| **EDUCATION** | Poor attendance less than 80% [ ]  | Reduced timetable [ ]  | Suspension of more than 3 days this academic year [ ]  | No recorded school [ ]  |  |  |
| **TRAVEL** | SEN transport/ taxi to school [ ]  | Duration of journey +45 minutes [ ]  | Inability of adults to transport young person to school [ ]  | No transport in place [ ]  |  |  |
| **MENTAL HEALTH**  | Observations of low mood or anxiety [ ]  | SDQ score med-high (17-40) [ ]  | Self-harm [ ]  | Suicidal ideation [ ]  |  |  |
| **EHCP**  | Moderate IQ [ ]  | EHCP- ASD with a school place [ ]  | EHCP-SEMH with school place [ ]  | Awaiting EHCP or suitable provision [ ]  |  |  |
| **MISSING** | Occasional missing (less than once every 6 months) [ ]  | +3 separate missing episodes in 12 months [ ]  | Recent increase in missing behaviour over the last 90 days [ ]  | 3 separate missing episodes + in 90 days [ ]  |  |  |
| **SUBSTANCE MISUSE**  | Incidents of experimenting with cannabis/ alcohol [ ]  | Occasional cannabis and class A [ ]  | Everyday cannabis [ ]  | Regular Class A use [ ]  |  |  |
| **VIOLENCE TO OTHERS** | Verbal and physical aggression/ hostility in school/ community [ ]  | Verbal and physical violence in school/ community [ ]  | Verbal or physical threats of violence to Foster Carer/staff [ ]  | Physical violence to Foster Carer/staff [ ]  |  |  |
| **OFFENDING**  | Anti-social behaviours [ ]  | Minor offences [ ]  | Escalation of offences and anti-social behaviours [ ]  | Open to Youth Justice [ ]  |  |  |
| **PLACEMENT**  | Not considered a good match [ ]  | Unplanned move [ ]  | Not in permanent placement [ ]  | FC/ provision given notice and/or 3+ placements in 12 months [ ]  |  |  |
| **CHANGE OF SOCIAL WORKER**  | Change in last 3 months [ ]  | More than 3 SWs in 12 months [ ]  | Does not get on with the social worker [ ]  | Refusing visits from SW [ ]  |  |  |
| **CHANGE OF CHILD’S ROUTINE**  | No eating [ ]  | Returning to placement late [ ]  | Not engaging with Family Time [ ]  | Disengaging from foster carer/staff [ ]  |  |  |
|  | **TOTL 1’S =** | **TOTAL 2’S=** | **TOTAL 3’S=** | **TOTAL 4’S=** |  |  |

Score meets Placement Stability Meeting: Yes/No

Team Manager agreement: Yes/No

Team manager/IRO rationale for not holding Placement Stability Meeting: