

**Wiltshire Council: Children's Services**  
**Placement Planning and Disruption Meetings**  
**(Permanent Placements: Fostering and Adoption)**

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**1. Placement Planning Meetings**

- 1.1 Placement Planning Meetings should be convened as part of the process of identifying the plan, placing and securing a child in a permanent placement, whether that is in a fostering (including Connected Persons) or adoption placement. The first Placement Planning Meeting in relation to a specific placement should be held before the placement or, where this is not possible because of the urgency of the situation, within 72 hours of the start of the placement.
- 1.2 Where a child is to be placed in an Independent Foster Agency (IFA) placement or in independent residential provision, it will not be necessary to include Placement Service staff in direct planning.
- 1.3 The Looked after Child Review should consider the continued relevance of the placement plan. An action arising from the review may be to convene a new Placement Planning Meeting. In addition, further Placement Planning Meetings should be held at intervals agreed with the child care social work Team Manager in consultation with the appropriate Placement Services Team Manager - or as required, for example where there are issues to be resolved in relation to the day to day arrangements for the placement, where it is identified that additional support to maintain the placement may be needed or where a risk of placement breakdown is indicated.
- 1.4 The appropriate Team Managers from the Child Care Team and Placements Services (in consultation with the child's social worker and Placement Services social worker) will agree the best format and venue for the meeting and who will chair it.
- 1.5 The people listed below should contribute to the meetings:
  - The child's social worker and/or other professional associated with the child e.g. Personal Advisor or advocate
  - The child
  - The child's parents or other family members (if appropriate)
  - For children in residential care, the child's keyworker and, where appropriate the home manager
  - For children in foster care, the foster carers and their supervising social worker
  - Other professionals involved in the case

- 1.6 Before any meeting, the chair should obtain, or be updated on, the following, if available:
- The child's Care Plan and Placement Plan
  - Any work which has been undertaken in supporting the child's placement
  - If relevant: the child's Personal Education Plan and Pathway Plan
- 1.7 Where the proposed placement has the effect of disrupting the arrangements made for the child's education and training - see Education of Children in Care Procedure.
- 1.8 The chair should also ensure that the child, parent(s) and others who have been asked to contribute understand the purpose of the meeting, how it will be conducted and are given the opportunity to put their views and suggestions.
- 1.9 If there are concerns about the suitability of the placement, consideration should be given to the following:
- Whether it is possible to sustain the placement until the next Looked After Child Review by, for example, providing additional support to the placement
  - Bringing forward the date of the next Looked After Child Review
  - Ending the placement
- 1.10 Any proposed change of placement should be subject to the usual authorisation and include consultation with the child's independent reviewing officer.

## **2. Disruption Meetings**

### **2.1 Evaluating Disruption**

2.1.1 The term 'disruption' is used to describe an event otherwise referred to as a 'placement breakdown' or a placement ending that was not part of the child's Care Plan, either in the ending itself or in the timing of the ending. Placements rarely disrupt as a result of the action of one individual but usually through a combination of several factors. Therefore, the objective of a Disruption Meeting is to look at the sequence of events and to learn from the experiences in order that:

- The child's future needs, including for a permanent placement, can be met
- The carers can be appropriately supported to recover and learn from the experience
- Through the identification of key learning episodes, practice can be improved across relevant social work teams

2.1.2 Participants need to know that the process is not an exercise to apportion blame. The purpose is to identify learning in order to bring about service improvement and better outcomes for the child. Disruption Meetings are not used as a substitute for other decision making forums (i.e. Statutory Reviews, foster carer's reviews, Child Protection Conferences etc) though the contents of a Disruption Meeting may be used to inform these meetings.

### **2.2 Agreeing and Convening the Meeting**

2.2.1 When held, Disruption Meetings are likely to be complex, detailed and time consuming if they are to be thorough. Therefore, a formal Disruption Meeting will only be convened in the following circumstances:

- A foster placement (including Connected Person) that had been intended to be permanent ends in an unplanned way. (In the majority of cases, 'permanent' is defined by whether or not there has been a formal linking approved by the Fostering Panel). There may be occasions where permanent linking has not been formalised. However, in the mind of the child, the carers and the professional teams, the placement has been managed as if it were to be permanent. For the purposes of this policy, those cases will be treated as if linking had occurred
- An adoption placement has broken down

2.2.2 In all cases, the child's social worker and supervising social worker or adoption worker should be alert to any evidence or suggestion that a placement is becoming unstable. In these circumstances, it may be necessary to convene an early review in order to resolve the difficulties or to convene a Placement Planning Meeting. Where disruption occurs:

- The child's Social Worker will inform the Child Care Team Manager
- The child's Social Worker will inform the Independent Reviewing Officer as this constitutes a "significant event"
- The Supervising Social Worker will inform the Fostering Team Manager, of any disruption within fostering
- The adoption Social Worker will inform the Adoption Team Manager, of any disruption within adoption

2.2.3 An initial discussion should take place between the appropriate Team Managers who should agree that the criteria for a Disruption Meeting are met. They should then agree who will discuss this with the Service Manager – Placement Services who it is anticipated will chair the meeting. (If they are unable to chair, the Service Manager of the Conference and Reviewing Service, Service Manager - Safeguarding or the Head of Service for Care and Placements Services will be approached.). With the chair being a suitably experienced senior manager, it will bring off-line independence and rigour to the meeting.

2.2.4 For adoption placements and long term matched fostering placements, the decision that a disruption meeting is unnecessary would be in exceptional circumstances only. This exception can only be agreed by the Head of Service for Care and Placement Services.

2.2.5 The Team Manager for the child is responsible for convening the Disruption Meeting having established the availability of the chair. They are also responsible for the administration of the meeting including ensuring that a minute taker is available, a venue is booked, invitations are sent out and minutes are distributed after the meeting.

### 2.3 **Timing of Disruption Meetings**

2.3.3 It is important to strike a balance between a meeting taking place too soon, when there may be a lack of clarity about key issues and too late, when issues may have become cloudy or distorted and momentum for learning is lost.

2.3.2 A Disruption Meeting would usually be convened by the Team Manager to be held between four and six weeks following the disruption. Where this is not possible due to the availability of key attendees or other exceptional circumstances, this must be agreed by the Service Manager – Placement Services.

### 2.4 **Content of Disruption Meetings**

2.4.1 Core matters to be covered in a Disruption Meeting are as follows. (In discussing each issue equality and diversity issues should be given consideration i.e. age, disability, gender, gender identity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy/maternity. This will include whether diversity issues were identified or not, and how this may have influenced or destabilized the placement.)

- The child's care history
- The child's identified needs (evidence; Child Permanence Report, Single Assessment)
- Selection process of the carers (including review of the Form F/PAR if appropriate)
- Introduction and transition process to the carers
- Placement procedures (including Risk Assessment, Placement Planning Meetings and matching reports, LAC Review recommendations and chronology including placement history)
- Disruption and subsequent events
- Key learning episodes and decisions/recommendations
- Future plans

2.4.2 The Chair of the meeting will be expected to have accessed and reviewed all relevant material relating to the foster carer(s) or adopter(s) including a review of both the Form F or PAR and Child Permanence Report used for matching purposes, if appropriate. The Chair will also request specific brief reports and a chronology from the Social Worker or Team Manager as required. The reports should include:

- A brief history of the child's care history
- The child's assessed needs at the time of placement
- The placement arrangements and support in order to meet the needs
- The history of the placement
- The circumstances of the disruption
- Current situation
- The views of the child and, where appropriate, family members

2.4.3 The Supervising Social Worker or adoption worker should have completed a report into the circumstances surrounding the disruption. Reports should be factual and evidenced (i.e. not relying upon individual's accounts or versions of events). They should also contain a professional analysis of what has occurred, which is again based on fact and evidence. In particularly difficult or complex circumstances, the Manager of either the Fostering or Adoption Team may commission an independent 'investigation' into the circumstances surrounding the disruption.

2.4.4 Disruption meetings should be minuted and include any decisions about future actions, key learning and recommendations for the child and/or carer concerned and wider practice improvement. The minutes will be saved within the child's Care First record and, if appropriate, on the carer's record.

## 2.5 Chairing and Participants

2.5.1 Consideration should be given to the number of active participants and whether they need to attend the whole of the Disruption Meeting. The circumstances surrounding the child will also influence the number of people invited, i.e. age, health of child, parents(s) circumstances and other significant people. The following should be invited as appropriate:

- Chair
- Supervising Social Worker or Adoption Worker
- Child's social worker
- Other staff closely involved (and their supervisors, if appropriate)
- The child's current carers
- Carers or adopters who have previously cared for the child
- The child (if it is in their interests). If not, it is important that their views are accurately conveyed. The child should be asked whether they wish to have an advocate attend with them or on their behalf at the Disruption Meeting
- Parents
- Independent Reviewing Officer

2.5.2 The following standard Agenda will be used:

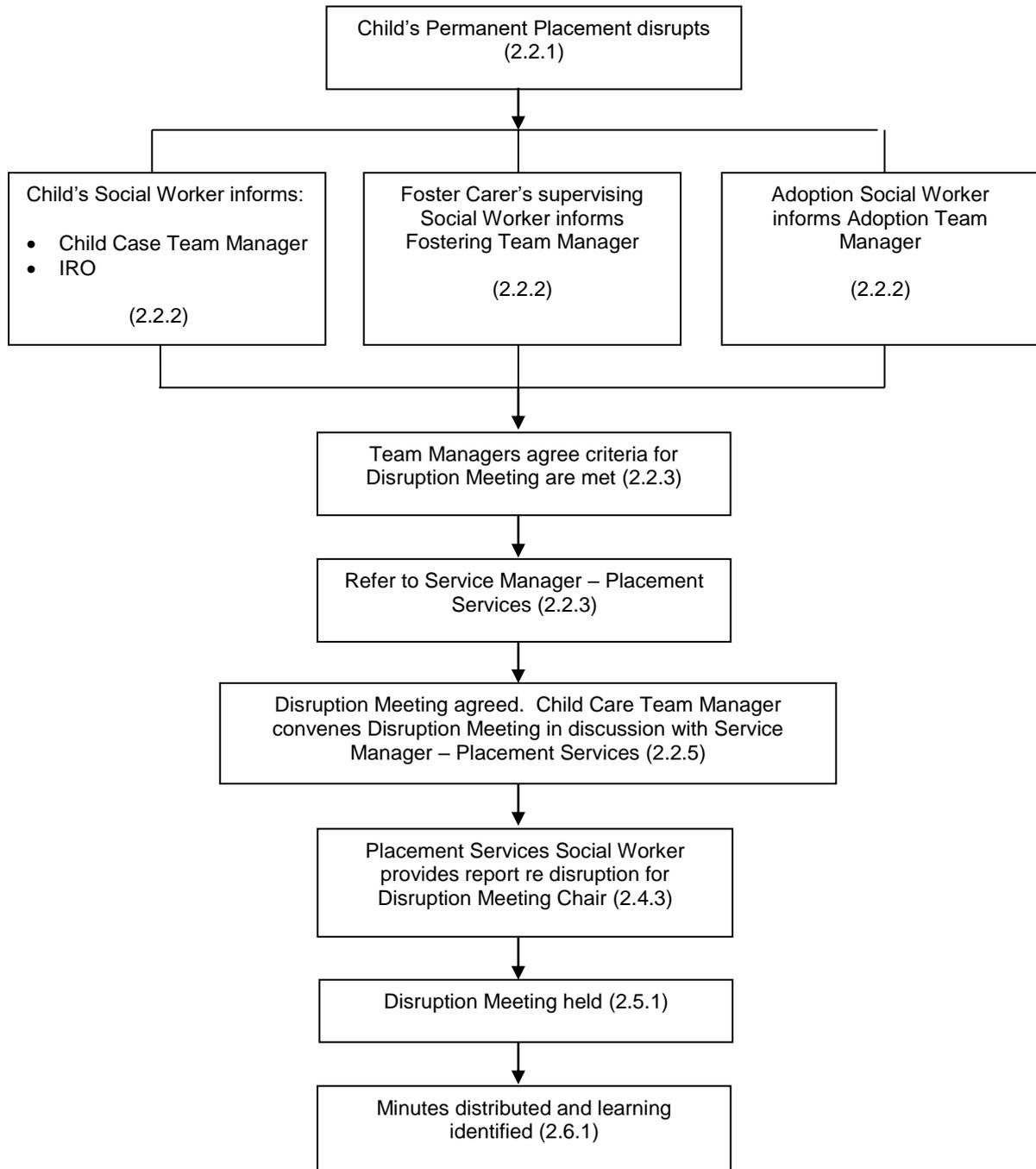
- Care history, placement details, legal status etc
- Background to the placement: matching and placement decisions
- The progress of the placement
- Circumstances leading to the disruption
- Current situation
- View of Child/Young Person
- View of Carer(s)
- View of Parent(s)
- View of Social Workers
- View of Independent Reviewing Officer
- View of Others
- Key Learning Episodes
- Summary and Decisions/Recommendations

## 2.6 **After the Meeting: Learning and Improvement**

- 2.6.1 The minutes of the meeting, including recommendations and decisions, should be available for everyone who attends the disruption meeting and others as identified and agreed at the meeting. The minutes should also be sent to the relevant Service Managers. The Service Manager - Placement Services will provide a summary of Key Learning Episodes and Decisions on a quarterly basis to the Corporate Parenting Panel and the relevant panels (Fostering or Adoption) for future learning and in order to provide feedback for action where appropriate. The decisions will also inform the LAC Improvement Plan on a six monthly basis as the main mechanism for ensuring that learning is used to improve services.
- 2.6.2 Consideration should be given to whether a review is required of the carers when a disruption has happened. It is likely where it is required, the review will subsequently be presented to the Fostering or Adoption Panel.
- 2.6.3 Where a disruption has occurred and the resource is an external one to the local authority, consideration will be given about whether the provider should continue to be used.
- 2.6.4 Where complaints against carers have been made or emerged as part of the disruption process, reference should be made to the procedure for managing allegations and, where necessary, a separate investigation will be carried out.
- 2.6.5 Any complaint against a carer must be noted both on their file and Care First.

## 2.7 Flowchart

### Disruption meetings: Summary Process



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