

Signs of Safety and Wellbeing

Foster Placement Disruption Guidance

Definition of disruption

A child's **placement matched for permanence** is considered to have disrupted if the placement ends prematurely i.e. before the child is ready to leave care. The placement is considered to have disrupted even when a notice period has been given and agreed. Disruptions may occur due to: social work or other professional concerns; the foster carer requesting removal of the child with or without a notice period; the child requesting an ending to the placement.

A child's **short-term foster placement** (child is not matched for permanence) is considered to have disrupted if the placement ends prematurely or immediately without prior plans for a move. A short term placement is not considered to have disrupted when a reasonable notice period has been given and agreed. Disruptions may occur due to: social work or other professional concerns; the foster carer requesting removal of the child with no notice period; the child requesting an immediate ending to the placement.

A disruption meeting should take place (usually within 6 weeks):

- When a 'permanence' placement ends without a notice period or clear plans for a move.

A disruption meeting should be CONSIDERED (usually within 6 weeks):

- When a 'permanence' placement ends even if a notice period has been given.
- When a 'short term' placement ends immediately or without clear plans for a move.
- When the child has experienced a series of moves (i.e. more than 2 planned or unplanned moves) within a 12 month period.
- When the foster carer has experienced more than 1 placement disruption within a 12-month period.

The timescale for holding a disruption meeting may be **beyond 6 weeks** in some cases. For example, where the breakdown has been emotionally very difficult for those concerned and a longer period of reflection or 'recovery' is helpful before the learning process begins.

Process for consideration of a disruption meeting:

The decision to hold a disruption meeting will be made by a Fostering and Adoption Practice Manager in discussion the Supervising Social Worker, Consultant Social Worker, Child Care Social Worker and/ or Child Care Practice Manager as necessary.

A record of this decision will be placed on the foster carer's LiquidLogic record by the Practice Manager and on the child's record by the Child Care team.

The case note item '**Disruption Decision**' should be used in all cases, including where the decision NOT to hold a disruption meeting has been taken. The rationale for this decision should be clearly stated.

The meeting may take place 'face to face' with participants attending in person; or it may be conducted using a virtual method such as Microsoft Teams.

Goals of the Disruption Meeting:

- To enable participants to share information and feelings about the fostering process, the placement and the disruption **without** assigning blame.
- To gain an understanding of what individuals would like this meeting to achieve.
- To identify factors that have led to the disruption e.g. support or matching issues and any complicating factors that may have contribute to the placement ending.
- To understand the current needs of the child, the carers, the birth family and the agency or agencies; including to prevent future disruptions for the child and the fostering household.
- To formulate future plans for the child based on what has been learnt from the disruption; for example, by identifying trends / patterns of behaviour that could contribute to the child's care plan and support future matching for the child.
- To create a statement for the child to help them understand "why [they] had to move"
- To highlight areas of development in policy and practice

The **child's view** of the disruption is essential; therefore, if the child is not attending the meeting, their views should be sought beforehand by their social worker or by another appropriate person e.g. child's advocate or independent visitor and shared at the meeting.

It is important that the disruption meeting establishes what might have made a difference for the child and or fostering household.

Arranging the Disruption Meeting

The Supervising Social Worker is responsible for arranging the meeting or, where this may be difficult, their line manager may do so. This includes inviting all the relevant attendees, arranging the venue/teams meeting and seeking a facilitator from the pool of available people*.

Who should attend Disruption meetings:

- Allocated Child Care social worker. (CCSW)
- Allocated Supervising social worker (SSW)
- Foster carer(s).
- Facilitator - *This may be a Fostering and Adoption Practice Manager (PM) or Consultant Social Worker (CSW), but not the line manager of the Supervising Social Worker concerned. They may also be a Signs of Safety and Wellbeing Practice Lead from within F&A Service or the Social Care Fieldwork Service including a CSW/PM. The facilitator is trained to enable the discussion, map the situation, and help the meeting achieve its goals.
- Independent Reviewing Officer – the IRO can be very helpful in reflecting on a placement breakdown as they may have been a consistent presence in the child's life including during previous placements and will continue to be involved with the child's new placement. It may not always be appropriate or possible for them to be present in person; in which case, their views on the disruption should be sought prior to the meeting by the fostering social worker.

Others to be invited if relevant and considered appropriate by the facilitator of the meeting:

- The Child
- Child's birth parents
- Child Care Practice Manager
- Current foster carer for the child & where appropriate previous foster carers
- School representative
- Therapist, School Nurse or Health Visitor.

Format of the Meeting:

It is important that everyone attending the meeting understands the purpose, so they can contribute in an informed way. A sheet outlining '**Goals for the Disruption Meeting**' will be laid on the table(s) for everyone to read on arrival (see Appendix 1).

The disruption meeting will be facilitated as a 'Signs of Safety and Wellbeing' style mapping event. The facilitator will begin by exploring *what was working well* prior to the disruption including the strengths of the placement, then look at *the worries*, risks and any *complicating factors* that contributed to the placement being unable to continue. The meeting will then consider *what needs to happen now* and will outline the *next steps* needed to achieve this. *Learning points* for the carers, the professionals and the service will also be created.

A mapping template is provided. The titles and scaling question can be altered to ensure relevant issues and questions are explored for each individual disruption meeting.

In order to map the views of participants in a way that is visible to everyone present, the facilitator will use 'wall charts' during a face-to-face meeting or, if the meeting is taking place virtually on Teams, the PowerPoint template will be used. Training and guidance for this method is provided.

Recording the recommendations / improving practice:

The facilitator will be responsible for recording the detail of the mapping on the template provided. They will also collate a clear list of recommendations from the sections 'what needs to happen' and 'next steps' and, where applicable, will record the 'disruption statement' in a format that can be shared with the child and others.

A **Key Learning Points (KLP)** template is provided to aid recording the statement and areas for improvement/learning. Any actions should be allocated to the appropriate person and timescales given for the work to be completed.

The facilitator will send the Key Learning Points template to the SSW to check for accuracy. The SSW will share these with the F&A Head of Service and will include a list of the names of all the people who should receive the KLP e.g. meeting attendees and others across the services with responsibility for ensuring any actions are taken. These are:

1. Child's social worker
2. Child Care practice manager
3. Supervising social worker
4. Fostering Practice Manager
5. Foster Carer(s)
6. IRO
7. Head of Service Fostering and Adoption
8. Service Manager for Social Care Fieldwork
9. Head of Service for Social Care Fieldwork
10. Principal Practice Lead for Children and Young People's Services
11. Other parties who contributed to the meeting.

The Head of Service (F&A) will then distribute the KLP with a covering email asking all those involved to act as required (see Appendix 2 suggested wording for the email).

If there is any disagreement about the KLP or Actions identified to address them, then these should be raised with the Head of Service (F&A) in the first instance. These can then be explored on a case by case basis including with those involved in the original Disruption Meeting, if necessary.

In the case of a disruption involving a placement matched for permanence, where matching is identified as a contributory factor, consideration should be given to sharing the relevant Key Learning Points with Permanence Panel for their learning and action. A summary of the disruption should be submitted to Panel, alongside the KLP but not the Mapping itself.

The SSW is responsible for recording on LiquidLogic that a meeting has taken place using the heading '**Disruption Meeting**'. The record will show the KLP and actions agreed.

Appendix 1

Goals of the Disruption Meeting

- To enable participants to share information and feelings about the fostering process, the placement and the disruption **without** assigning blame.
- To gain an understanding of what individuals would like this meeting to achieve.
- To identify factors that have led to the disruption
- To interpret the current needs of the child, the carers, the birth family and the agency or agencies; including to prevent future disruptions for the child and the fostering household.
- To formulate future plans for the child based on what has been learnt from the disruption.
- To create a statement for the child to help them understand “why they had to move”
- To highlight areas of development in policy and practice

Appendix 2

Suggested email wording for Head of Fostering & Adoption to share the KLP with all relevant parties:

Dear colleagues

A disruption meeting was held on [date] to explore the breakdown of the foster placement for [child's name].

The situation was mapped to acknowledge what went well in the placement and to explore what the worries were; factors that contributed to the placement disruption have been identified and 'what needs to happen next' for the child, foster carers, fostering and social care fieldwork services to prevent future disruptions has been described. Some Key Learning Points have been created for those involved or responsible for provision of a service.

Please refer to the attached Key Learning Points report and note any actions that may require your attention or management oversight to ensure the learning is acted upon.

Kind regards

[Name]
Head of Fostering & Adoption