



Disruption meeting procedure

For use when a child's adoptive placement disrupts prior to an Adoption Order

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Introduction

1. The unplanned ending of a placement of a child intended to be permanent is one of the most difficult experiences that can occur in adoption. The emotional impact for children and adoptive families is far-reaching, and for professionals involved there are significant and often complex issues to manage in both the short-term and longer term.
2. The ways in which the breakdowns of permanent placements are managed for children is critical in supporting them to recover and move forward in their lives. The welfare and well-being of children must always remain paramount during a disruption process, and professionals must act with this in the forefront of their mind.

Definition of disruption

3. For the purposes of this procedure 'disruption' has been defined as follows:
"An adoptive placement which ends in an unplanned way, either during introductions or prior to an Adoption Order being made."

Causes of disruption

4. Research informs us that there are four broad causes of disruption:
 - The emergence of previously unidentified, misunderstood, or unknown factors
 - The mis-assessment of the family or the child's readiness to make an adoptive attachment
 - The appearance of unpredictable circumstances which have impacted on the process
 - Lack of all available information about the child given to adoptive parents
5. Within these broad factors there will be many nuances which are particular to each circumstance. All factors should be considered in a Disruption Meeting, with a focus on those factors which played the most significant role in the disruption of the adoptive placement.

Purpose of the Disruption Meeting

6. The aim of reviewing the disruption is not to apportion blame, but to understand what happened and to use that information to inform future planning for the child(ren) and adopters, and to make recommendations for practice as a learning tool for adoption agencies and local authorities.
7. The Meeting should review the sequence of events leading up to the disruption and identify learning points, the primary aim of which will be to assist in planning for the child's future. The meeting should consider the following areas, along with other areas that may be specific to the case:
 - Share information and identify significant factors which have led to the disruption
 - Consider the quality and preparation and support of the child, adoptive parents, and any other relevant others i.e., other birth or adopted siblings

- Identify learning which will inform future planning for the child
 - Support the process of 'healing' or 'recovery' for the child and the adoptive family
 - Develop and improve knowledge and practice for the future, including lessons that can be learnt by all the key agencies involved.
8. A Disruption Meeting is not a substitute for a formal review of adopter status or managing allegations in relation to adopters, although the outcome of this process may inform other procedures. A formal review of adopter approval status should be led by the adoptive parents' Adoption Agency. Any allegations against the adoptive parents or serious concerns about the quality of care should be initiated by the child's borough through the LADO process.
 9. The meeting should capture the experiences and opinions of a wide range of professionals who have been involved with the adoptive placement as well as the experiences and opinions of the prospective adoptive parents.

Initiation and timing of the meeting

10. The Adopt London RAA will take responsibility for initiating and coordinating the organisation of the Disruption Meeting, unless otherwise agreed by senior managers in the RAA and the child's borough. The RAA will appoint somebody to organise the meeting (usually the Panel Adviser from the Adopt London RAA) and they will liaise with key professionals within the child's LA about the timing of the meeting and attendees, and will make arrangements for an Independent Chair, and for a minute taker.
11. It is important to ensure the Disruption Meeting is held in a timely fashion, usually 8-12 weeks after the placement has ended. This gives those involved time to focus on the immediate actions needed to support the child and / or adoptive parents but ensures that their memories are still clear and reliable. Holding the meeting at this stage also allows for any conclusions / recommendations to inform the future planning process for the child and adoptive parents. Holding the meeting much sooner than 8 weeks may limit the extent to which the adoptive parents feel able to participate in the meeting.

Meeting format

12. Disruption meetings usually take the form of a multi-professional meeting which takes place over the course of a day. Where necessary and appropriate, the meeting Chair will conduct separate interviews with those who will not be joining the main meeting – for example where adoptive parents are willing to participate but not in the full meeting, or where children are able to give their views directly. When separate interviews have taken place, the Chair is responsible for representing those views and experiences in the meeting. Different meeting formats and arrangements will be considered on a case-specific basis if required.
13. A core group of attendees will be invited for the whole meeting, whilst others who have only been involved for part of the process may be invited to attend a short part of the meeting by appointment.
14. Questionnaire's will be sent out in advance of the meeting to relevant attendees to seek views and comments to ensure that the meeting can be focused on the most critical areas for discussion but that other areas can also be captured in the Disruption Report after the meeting. It is particularly important to receive completed questionnaires from key people who are unable to attend the meeting.

Role of the Independent Chair

15. The meeting will be chaired by an Independent Chair who has not had prior involvement, or responsibility for the case. This will usually be an Adopt London Independent Adoption Panel Chair. The Chair should be identified as soon as possible to allow for the 8 – 12 week timescales to be met.
16. The role of the Chair is critical to the success of the meeting. They are responsible for:
 - Thoroughly reading all relevant documents in advance of the meeting, including questionnaires submitted by attendees
 - Identifying key areas on which to focus and preparing an agenda
 - In partnership with the meeting organiser:
 - o Prepare an invitation list identifying key core attendees and timing of appointments for additional attendees
 - o Agree who should be asked to complete questionnaires
 - o Agree a return date and address for the supporting papers and completed confidential questionnaires
 - Liaise with the meeting organiser to ensure that any supporting documentation as requested is received by required date
 - Prepare a précis / summary to present to the meeting
 - Prepare questions and issues to be raised during the meeting
 - Summarise feedback from questionnaires
 - Enable participants to share their views and feelings within the meeting
 - Write a summary report of the meeting, with conclusions and recommendations for future planning and practice
 - Complete 'Chair's Disruption Meeting questionnaire feedback'.

Meeting minutes and Disruption Report

17. Minutes will be taken at all Disruption Meetings and will usually be taken by an Adopt London Adoption Panel Coordinator. They will not be verbatim minutes, but they will include meeting attendance, apologies, reports received, and a detailed summary of the discussion that has taken place within each section of the meeting. The minutes should be agreed by the Independent Chair and the meeting organiser.
18. The Independent Chair will use the meeting minutes to prepare their report, which should be an outcome-focussed summary with conclusions and recommendations.
19. A copy of the final Disruption Report and minutes should be placed on the child's file, and a copy sent to the adoptive parents' Adoption Agency.

Pre-meeting documents

20. The following documents must be made available to the chair at least 14 days in advance of the meeting:
 - Questionnaires from participants
 - Matching Panel papers including Child Permanence Report, Permanence Medical, Foster Carers' Form, ADM for Child's Adoption Decision Sheet, Adopters PAR / AAR, Adopters Approval Panel Minutes, Adopters ADM Decision Sheet, Adopters Review of Approval (if relevant) ADM Decisions Sheet for match
 - LAC Review Minutes for the child
 - Relevant support meeting / professional meeting minutes
 - Relevant case / statutory visit notes
 - Introductions plan

- Midway review minutes
- Stability or review meeting minutes
- Chronology of key events (see 21)
- Updating health / education reports about the child
- Any external or other professional reports that are relevant

21. It is best practice for the child's social worker, family finder, and assessing social worker, to create a chronology of events for reference within the meeting. The family finder's should include family finding activity and may be combined with the child's social work chronology.

Suggested Disruption Meeting agenda

22. The meeting will focus on the circumstances of the disruption and whilst information about the child's background is relevant, this should be available as a summary for circulation with the agenda, prior to the meeting.

23. The following is a proposed meeting agenda, which should be reviewed and tailored to the case by the Chair and meeting organiser.

- Independent Chair's summary and introduction
 - Introductions and confidentiality statement
 - Confirmation of factual information for child and adoptive parents
 - Adopters' approval and approval Criteria
 - Placement including start and end dates
- Information about the child and the child's journey
 - Discussion of child's life with birth family prior to coming into care (ethnicity, culture, religion, siblings and family dynamics and significant relationships and any specialist assessments or support)
 - Discussion of care proceedings and care planning (care concerns, residential or community-based assessments, specialist assessments including together or apart assessments, legal outcomes, contact plans and birth family update)
 - Discussion of child's care experience and placement moves (preparation for moves, introductions, reactions to moves)
 - Current support for the child
- Information about family finding and matching process
 - Experience and history of family finding
 - Preparation of the child
 - Transitions planning
 - Introductions process
 - Placement experience, support, and disruption (emerging concerns and timescales, supports disruption decision making, child reactions to disruption)
- Matching Panel process
- Information about the adoptive parents and their journey
 - Adopter preparation and training (timescales, stage 1 processes)
 - Adopter assessment (timescales and stage 2 processes, motivation, participation, support networks, references, and checks, matching and approval criteria)
 - Adopter family finding and matching (timescales, family finding and linking experiences, changes to matching criteria)
 - Placement experience and support (emerging concerns and timescales, supports, disruption decision making, and adoptive parents' reactions to disruption)
 - Current Support for Adopters

- Other professional involvements
- Summary discussions, reflections, and recommendations
 - Child's needs and care planning
 - What are we worried about and what has worked well
 - Lessons and messages for agencies involved
 - Recommendation and further actions

Participation in Disruption Meetings

24. Key professionals will be invited to attend the full meeting as Core Members:
- Child's social worker, Team Manager or equivalent, and IRO
 - Family finder, family finding Team Manager or equivalent
 - Adoptive parents' assessing social worker, assessing Team Manager or equivalent
 - Adoption Panel Adviser
 - Fostering supervising social worker for placement prior to adoption transitions
 - Fostering supervising social worker for current placement
 - Adoptive parents
25. Other professionals will be invited to attend specific timeslots within the meeting by appointment unless there are specific reasons for them to be involved for the full meeting:
- Adoption Panel Chair
 - Medical Adviser and / or Health Visitor (usually only if health issues are relevant in the case)
 - Representative from school or nursery if applicable
 - Virtual School if applicable
 - Any person providing a support service directly to the child or the adoptive parents, such as a therapist or CAMHS practitioner
 - The views of the child should be represented where appropriate (depending on their age and circumstances) in the meeting by someone who knows them (see 27)
 - The views of the birth parents should be represented in the meeting if known
26. The Agency Decision Maker for the local authority responsible for the child will be informed of the meeting and invited to attend the summary and key findings section of the meeting.

Gaining the child's wishes and feelings

27. The views of the child should be represented at the meeting by someone who knows them. This may be by the child's social worker, the current carer, or the Independent Reviewing Officer. It is likely to be inappropriate to ask a child so soon after a disruption to specifically share their views for the disruptions meeting, however their social worker or someone else who knows them well should be able to represent their views and feelings from the usual work they will be undertaking during visits and in preparation for a LAC review. Older children may be given the opportunity to express their views in other ways where appropriate – for example in writing, either by completing a simple questionnaire or by writing a letter.
28. The way in which the child's views will be shared and who will do this should form part of the planning completed by the Chair and meeting organiser.
29. Where there has been a birth child or other adopted child in the adoptive household there should also be consideration of whether their views or feelings can be sought and shared within the meeting. Whether this is appropriate and possible depends largely on the circumstances of the case.

Gaining Birth Parents Views and Wishes

30. It is essential for the child's birth parents to be informed of the placement disruption and for their views to be sought by the local authority, prior to the Disruption Meeting. If they have not been informed by the time of the meeting, the Chair will ask the local authority representatives to confirm how and when this will take place.

Distribution of minutes and Disruption Report

31. The Chair and the meeting organiser will approve the minutes of the meeting, following which they will be distributed to all those who were invited to the meeting. Meeting minutes will be redacted for sections where the attendee was not present in the meeting. Minutes will be sent out with the request that any omissions, factual inaccuracies, or misrepresentation of individual or agency views should be reported to the meeting organiser within 7 working days of receipt.
32. Minutes and the Disruption Report must be uploaded to the child's file and sent to the following senior managers:
- Head of Service, Regional Adoption Agency
 - Agency Decision Maker, Child's local authority (for cascading to relevant senior managers)
 - Head of Service or Director for the external Adoption Agency where the placement was inter-agency
33. The Adopt London RAA and local authority must keep a record of all disruptions and Disruption Meetings.

Organisation and Panel Learning

34. The final Disruption Meeting minutes and Disruption Report should be presented to the Adoption Panel who made the matching recommendation and considered within Panel training.
35. The Adopt London RAA, local authority, and external Adoption Agency are responsible for considering how to share and implement learning and recommendations from the Disruption Report within their organisation.
36. Adopt London hold and collate anonymised information about disruptions in order to share learning across the four Adopt London RAAs.

Additional documents

37. The following templates and additional documents which complement this policy are available from Adopt London Adoption Panel Advisors:
- Disruption Meeting report template
 - Disruption Meeting minutes template
 - Disruption Meeting agenda
 - Disruption Meeting recommendations and lessons learnt template