

Derby City Council Permanency Policy

Version 6.0

December 2025

Policy Scope

All children and young people deserve a secure and stable family home. This must be within a family environment unless there are significant needs that cannot be met within a family placement. Where this cannot be achieved within birth families, there is a duty to provide an alternative permanent home. All children must have a permanency plan where a decision has been made that they cannot live with their birth or extended family within an appropriate timescale to prevent unnecessary drift and delay.

From January 2025, all fostering cases (IFA and DCC) will be heard for permanence decisions at the Permanence Panel.

There are 3 main routes to permanence:

1. Where a mother of an unborn child requests that the Local Authority place her child for adoption following their birth.
2. Following presentation of a case to a Gateway Panel Meeting to approve care proceedings, where this is agreed, there will be a permanence planning meeting in line with the care proceeding timescales.
3. Prior to a child's second statutory looked after review (will be referred to as LAC reviews from here on in) so that the review can then endorse the permanence plan for a child.

Options for Permanence

1. Returning Home.
2. Placement with Family or Friends or Connected Persons.
3. Adoption.
4. Fostering for Adoption and Temporary Approval as Foster Carers of Approved Prospective Adopters.
5. Special Guardianship Orders.
6. Child Arrangements Orders.
7. Permanent Fostering.
8. Staying Put.



Assessing and Planning for Permanence

Assessments of a child's needs in relation to his or her Permanence Plan must:

- Focus on outcomes.
- Consider stability issues, including the child's and family's needs for long-term support and the child's needs for links, including family time, with his or her parents, siblings, and wider family network.
- Be clearly linked to previous assessments of the child's needs.

Where a child has made significant and strong attachments to their current carers, it may well be that those carers are best placed to provide a permanent placement for the child. However, no assumptions should be made that existing foster carers or other parties requesting to become permanent carers for the child are necessarily best placed to do so and no requests should be made directly to foster carers to consider becoming a permanent carer for a child.

Where this is deemed appropriate, this should first be discussed with the foster carer's supervising social worker, who can explore this option with the foster carer. If it appears to be a viable option, then the foster carer will undergo an assessment as a potential permanent carer for the child. This process may take place alongside assessments of other applicants.

For children who have been placed with their foster carers for over 2 years exploration of Special Guardianship should be undertaken with the foster carers and discussed in LAC reviews in line with the SGO tracking process.

All cases that have permanent fostering as their identified care plan will need to be heard at panel as soon as that care plan has been agreed. When cases with a care plan of permanent fostering are transferred to the Children In Care Service (from Locality), they will be allocated for completion of a Single Assessment with the specific remit of assessing suitability of permanent fostering as a permanency option in their current placement.

Social Workers will need to follow the process identified in Appendix 3 in order to book cases onto panel.

If a child is placed with a connected person, discussions regarding permanence should already have been undertaken as part of the viability assessment and subsequent fostering assessment. It is expected that in the vast majority of cases a

Special Guardianship Order (although on occasions a Child Arrangements Order may be a more suitable alternative for that child/ren) will be pursued and completed within 12 months of commencement of placement. All Special Guardianship Orders will have a robust support plan and access to support post order.



Where carers have expressed an interest in a Special Guardianship Order, they should be visited within 2 weeks to share information. Once their formal expression of interest and request to be assessed has been received the case should be allocated for the assessment to commence.

Assessments should take no longer than 12 weeks from the receipt of the request from the carers to be assessed and the case should be presented to the first Panel after the 12-week timescale for completion.

The Team Manager should record in supervision the timeline from receiving the formal request for assessment, the 12-week completion date and panel date. This should continue to be reviewed and any reasons for delay clearly recorded.

Children who have a care plan of adoption and the decision is made to revoke the Placement Order also need to have their long term placements needs and plan for permanency assessed and decisions on future care plans need to be discussed at a Case Management meeting.

The Placement Order revocation work will be undertaken by the Child Permanence Team including an updated Single Assessment to assess next steps regarding care planning and re-visiting viability assessments with birth family which may be required to inform the application and long-term care plan.

The child will be allocated a social worker within the Children in Care Service once the application to revoke the Placement Order has been made. The Children in Care Social Worker will assess the child's long-term placement needs. If the current foster carer is offering permanence, the assessment of their ability to meet the child's need should progress to permanency panel on completion of the assessment which should be no later than 6 months after the revocation of the Placement Order or sooner if there is no contest to the care plan by birth parents.

If the current foster placement is not offering permanence or the assessment identifies that the carers are unable to meet the child's long term needs an alternative placement should be sought where the child and carers are appropriately matched, and placement is intended to provide permanence once assessment has taken place. In such circumstances the plan for permanence should be presented to panel within 12 months of the making of the placement.

In both above circumstances, both the Supervising Social Worker, child's Adoption and Children in Care/Locality Social Workers should attend the Panel.

Identifying Permanence Options

Child Arrangements/ Special Guardianship Orders	Adoption	Permanent Fostering
Child needs the security of a legally defined placement with alternative carers but does not require a lifelong commitment involving a change of identity.	Child's primary need is to belong to a family who will make a lifelong commitment.	Primary need is for a stable, loving family environment whilst there is still a significant level of continued involvement with the birth family.
Child's relation, foster or other carer needs to exercise day to day parental responsibility and is prepared to do so as a lifelong commitment.	Child's birth parents are not able or not willing to share parental responsibility in order to meet their child's needs, even though there may be contact.	Child has a clear sense of identity with the birth family, whilst needing to be looked after away from home.
There is no need for continuing monitoring and review by the Local Authority, although support services may still need to be arranged.	Child needs an opportunity to develop a new sense of identity whilst being supported to maintain or develop a healthy understanding of their past.	There is need for continuing oversight and monitoring of the child's developmental progress.
Child has a strong attachment to the alternative carers and legally defined permanence is assessed as a positive contribution to their sense of belonging and security.	Child expresses a wish to be adopted (age dependent).	Birth parents are able and willing to exercise a degree of parental responsibility.

Permanency Panel

A Permanency Panel consisting of DHoS Children's Fieldwork/HoS & DHoS Specialist Services, representative from IRO Service, Team Manager DCC Fostering Service will convene on a monthly basis to:

- Ratify the matching of all permanent placements for children with IFA & DCC foster carers.
- Ratify all Staying Put arrangements.



- Ratify Special Guardianship Assessments and Support Plans.
- Consider good practice guide at Appendix 1.

Where there is an urgent need for a HoS decision on an SGO support plan, i.e. due to Court timescales, then cases can be discussed/approved outside of panel. However, this should be the exception.

Standard documents for Panel to consider any permanence option – 1 week prior to panel:

- **Permanent Foster Care:** Updated Single Assessment. The Single Assessment will be a targeted assessment around the suitability of placement long term; include evidence of the voice of the child and their expressed wishes and feelings, and the views of the carers, the IRO and any other significant persons.
- Full up to date child Chronology.
- Minutes of the child's last Looked After Review.
- Life Story Work (though absence at this stage will not preclude consideration at Permanency Panel and securing a permanence option).
- Report from the agency/supervising social worker on annual review, safeguarding issues, training, medical fitness and carers and agency view of long-term match; assessment of the carers in respect of other foster placements and the impact on the child needing permanent fostering. See appendix 4.
- **Special Guardianship Orders:** BAAF form C and support plan and if IFA carers, approved financial form from HOS.
- **Staying Put:** Living Together agreement informed by Independent Living Skills checklist, Staying Put proposal and copy of latest Pathway Plan'.

The Panel will then approve, reject or defer the application acting in the best interests of the child.

Actions taken post approval (Permanent Foster Care):

- Social worker to visit the child and advise them of the decision;
- Attached letter to be sent to carers by Chair of Panel explaining the rationale for approval – See Appendix 2;



- Child's file to be updated to reflect the decision.
- Change carers approval to long term (POF1) at their next annual review.
- Social worker to update LCS with a My Life My Journey case note to be provided to the child explaining the decision made and the rationale for this.

Actions to be taken post rejection (Permanent Foster Care):

- Social worker to visit the child and explain the reasons why placement was not ratified.
- Attached letter to be sent to carers by Chair of Panel explaining the rationale for rejection – Appendix 2.
- Urgent care planning decisions to be considered in respect to placement sustainability.
- Supervising social worker will need to discuss with foster carer outcome, rationale and next steps.
- Social Worker to update LCS with a My Life My Journey case note to be provided to the child explaining the decision made and the rationale for this.

Actions to be taken post deferment (Permanent Foster Care):

- Social Worker to visit the child and advise them of the decision.
- Attached letter to be sent to the Carers explaining rationale for deferment – Appendix 2.
- Action Plan with timescales developed to respond to issues.
- Book the case onto next available panel. Any change of future approval, resignation or incidents or allegations will be considered within case management and care planning processes.
- Supervising Social Worker will need to discuss with foster carer outcome, rationale and next steps.
- Social Worker to update LCS with a My Life My Journey case note to be provided to the child explaining the decision made and the rationale for this.

Actions taken post approval (Special Guardianship Order):

- Social Worker to visit the child and SGO carer to advise them of the decision.
- Chair of Panel to sign off SGO support plan and social worker to ensure carer/s receive a signed copy and a signed copy is attached to the child/ren's case file.
- Minute taker to add minutes to child/ren's case file and Chair to add case note to reflect the decision on child/ren's case file.
- Social Worker to update LCS with a My Life My Journey case note to be provided to the child explaining the decision made and the rationale for this.

Actions to be taken post rejection (Special Guardianship Order):

- Social Worker to visit the child and carer to explain the decision.
- Minute taker to add minutes to child/ren's case file and Chair to add case note to reflect the decision on child/ren's case file.
- Urgent care planning decisions to be considered in respect to placement sustainability.
- Social Worker to update LCS with a My Life My Journey case note to be provided to the child explaining the decision made and the rationale for this.

Actions to be taken post deferment (Special Guardianship Order):

- Social Worker to visit the child and carer to explain the decision.
- Action Plan with timescales developed to respond to issues.
- Book the case onto the next available Panel.
- Social Worker to update LCS with a My Life My Journey case note to be provided to the child explaining the decision made and the rationale for this.

Actions taken post approval (Staying Put):

- Social Worker to visit the young person and carer/s to explain the decision.
- Chair of Panel to sign off Staying Put agreement and Social Worker to ensure carer/s receive a signed copy and a signed copy is attached to the young person's case file.



- Social Worker to add minutes young person's case file and Chair to add case note to reflect the decision on young person's case file.
- Social Worker to update LCS with a My Life My Journey case note to be provided to the child explaining the decision made and the rationale for this.

Actions to be taken post rejection (Staying Put):

- Social Worker to visit the young person and carer/s to explain the decision.
- Social Worker to add minutes to young person's case file and Chair to add case note to reflect the decision on young person's case file.
- Urgent care planning decisions to be considered in respect to placement sustainability.
- Social Worker to update LCS with a My Life My Journey case note to be provided to the child explaining the decision made and the rationale for this.

Actions to be taken post deferment (Staying Put):

- Social Worker to visit the young person and carer/s to explain the decision.
- Social Worker to add minutes to young person's case file and Chair to add case note to reflect the decision on young person's case file.
- Urgent care planning decisions to be considered in respect to placement sustainability and where needed, book the case onto the next available panel.
- Social Worker to update LCS with a My Life My Journey case note to be provided to the child explaining the decision made and the rationale for this.

Appendix 1

Good Practice Guide Identifying the best permanence option

The permanency planning process will identify which permanence option is most likely to meet the needs of the individual child/young person, taking account of his/her wishes and feelings.

The Panel will consider:

- The assessment process and ask how stability for this child will be achieved.
- Long term stability means the sense of a permanent home with the same family or group of people, as part of the same community and culture, and with long-term continuity of relationships and identity.
- Short or medium-term stability or continuity will be important for children who are going to stay in care for a brief period before going home and for children who are going to need new permanent arrangements. The quality of a child's attachments and life will be detrimentally affected by uncertainties, separations from what /who is known and changes of school and placement.
- Educational experiences, links with extended family, hobbies and friendships and support to carers, contribute to guarding against disruption and placement breakdown.
- The importance of carefully listening to what children want from the placement, helping the relationship between carer and child to build, making thorough plans around family time with family, providing vigorous support during crisis times and taking a sufficiently flexible attitude to adoption by carers.
- The older a child is, the less likely it is that the child will secure a permanent family through adoption.
- The larger the family group of children, the harder it is to secure a single placement that will meet all the needs of all the children.

Appendix 2

Letter template for Permanent Fostering Notification of Permanency Panel Decision

Dear

Re: (insert child's name here)

I am writing to advise you of the decision made by the Permanency Panel on (insert date here).

As you are aware this case was presented to us following a recommendation made at the looked after review.

We have considered the representations and reports provided and have decided to (Approve/Reject/Defer) this application.

Yours sincerely

(insert name here)

Panel Chair

cc: Child's Social Worker
Carer's Supervising Social Worker
Child's Independent Reviewing Officer



Appendix 3

Process for booking cases into Permanence Panel

1. Permanency Panel will take place on the last Wednesday of each month. There will be slots for cases pertaining to permanent fostering which will be chaired by HOS Specialist Services, with panel membership from DHOS (Specialist Services) and a representative from the IRO Service. They will be minuted by Panel Support using the agreed pro forma.
2. SGO cases will be separated out into Locality Fieldwork Services in the morning and CIC/IDCS services in the afternoon. There will be SGO slots for cases in the morning. The Social Worker will attend remotely to discuss the case. The slots will be 30 minutes per case. Panel Support will minute these cases. The Chair for the morning SGO element of panel will be the DHOS Locality Fieldwork Services, supported by a representative from the IRO Service.
3. The CIC/IDCS SGO cases will take place in the afternoon. The Social Worker will attend remotely to discuss the case. The slots will be 30 minutes per case and will be minuted by Panel Support.
4. Staying Put cases will have slots each month (30-minute time slots each) there will be no requirement for the allocated Social Worker to attend. There will be no Panel support minute taking and the chair will sign off Staying Put agreements (if approved) and liaise directly with the allocated Social Worker before adding a case note to LCS.

Booking process

1. The allocated Social Worker will need to book the child onto panel by emailing panelandminuting.support@derby.gov.uk.
2. Panel Support will send a reminder of the booking to the Social Worker 2 weeks prior to Panel requesting paperwork (see Permanence Policy for details of what paperwork is required based on the type of case to be discussed) within 1 week of panel.
3. Paperwork will be collated by Panel Support and sent to Panel chair one-week pre-panel. If paperwork is not received by this point, cases will be removed from the panel list and Panel Support will email contact the relevant Team Manager to ask that they make direct communication with the chairing HOS to request that a case is maintained on panel if this is so desired.



4. Minutes SGO and permanent fostering will be completed within 5 working days of panel and distributed to Panel chair to approve.
5. Minutes will then be disseminated by Panel Support to chair, Social Worker, Team Manager and any other Panel attendees.

Suggested Notes:

Carers considering the commitment to Permanent Fostering should be invited to transfer to Derby City Council. They should be offered a bespoke allowance structure that matches their current agency offer.

Appendix 4

Fostering Agency Report for Derby City Council Permanency Panel

Name of child	
DOB of child	
Name of Supervising Social Worker	
Fostering Agency	
Name of child's Social Worker	
Name(s) of Foster Carers	
Number of children in placement (including subject(s))	
How many are LAC	
Date of last Fostering Panel	
Any recommendations from Panel requiring action	
Are statutory checks of carers up to date (eg; health assessments, DBS)	
Can you confirm that the carers are up to date with all mandatory training YES/NO	
If NO what is outstanding and what is being done to address this and when will this be completed?	
Any relevant specialist training carers have undertaken- please specify	
Any identified training/support needs and how these will be addressed	
Supervising social workers report on the foster carers ability to meet the specific needs of the child/children and their care plan	
Placement	

Health	
Education	
Emotional / behavioural / therapeutic	
Contact	
Carers assessed understanding of permanence	
Foster carers views about offering permanence to the child	
Supervising social workers views about the plan for permanency via long term fostering with the carers	

Signed	
Name	
Role	
Date	

Appendix 5

Permanence Policy Outcomes Framework

To ensure the efficacy of the permanence panel, there will be on-going permanence tracking via:

- Annual Permanence report identifying numbers of SGO support plans, Staying Put and Permanent Foster care agreed by panel and stability.
- 6 monthly report completed by DHOS (Specialist Services) on number of children in long term care where permanence decision has yet to be made and rationale for this.
- Monthly KPI report sent to managers in Social Care on numbers of cases of children in long term care with/without a permanence decision.
- Monthly KPI report sent to managers in Social Care on stability of children's living arrangements related to the numbers of moves children in care experience and length of time living in current arrangement.