



Disruption Meetings - Guidance for Staff and Carers

For disruptions of placements in foster and residential care, see the Placement Planning, Placement Stabilisation and Disruption Meetings procedure.

For disruptions of adoptive placements see Disruption of Adoptive Placements Procedure

The following guidance is intended to help staff and carers who have not previously attended a Disruption Meeting - to prepare them for what is involved and be better informed as to the nature of the meeting and how it will be conducted.

There are several different purposes to each Disruption Meeting, but the main one is to understand what has happened in the placement in order to inform any future planning for the child. The Disruption Meeting is not a planning meeting, but is an opportunity to review the past as a preparation for the future.

In order to understand the placement, it is necessary to go back to the beginning of the child's life and to analyse the effect of the moves the child will have experienced, the parenting the child has received and any relationships in the child's life. A crucial stage to look at is the assessment of the child's needs at the time of seeking a placement to see how accurately these were understood at the time.

The linking of the child to the carer is another key stage and, before looking at this, it is necessary to consider the application of the prospective carer, the assessment of what they were offering and the help they were given in understanding the needs of the child requiring placement.

The meeting then goes on to consider the panel decisions (where applicable) about the placement, the introduction of the child to the new family and the placement itself. It is important to look at all the good things in the placement as well as the things that went wrong and to remember that no one can ever take away the good experiences from a child. They are a positive base on which to build for the future, while help is offered to overcome the negative experiences of their life.

Finally, it is appropriate to look at the child's situation since the placement ended and to consider what the child's needs are currently. All this information is made available to the next planning meeting. It is hoped that the carers will also find the disruption meeting helpful as a way of understanding what has happened and of helping them to move on to decisions about their own future.

With the benefit of hindsight, it is always possible to see where things might have been done differently but a Disruption Meeting offers an opportunity to social workers individually, to the Children, Families and Education Directorate as a whole and to carers to learn from these placements.

It is important to stress that these meetings are not intended as a way of blaming anyone and one aim is to help each person see their own contribution in the wider picture of the child's life. Carers in particular can be reassured to see that the task that they took on was far greater than they had anticipated and the fact that the placement did not last was due to a

whole series of factors starting well before they met the child. The meeting is intended to be as supportive as possible even though painful issues must be discussed.

Disruption Meetings are long but they are interrupted by refreshment breaks. In order to cover all the various aspects, it is necessary to chair the meeting fairly tightly but is very important that everyone feels able to make a contribution.

Someone will take minutes during the meeting and afterwards a full report will be prepared. It is a valuable document which pulls together the whole of the child's life so far so one day it will be available to the child to explain why decisions were made as they were. Everybody who attends a Disruption Meeting will receive a copy of the report of the meeting, which is of course a confidential document.