

**Fostering Service
Policy**

**Family Finding and Matching Policy
– Permanent Foster Placements**

Statutory Basis for the Guidance

- Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations, Vol 2, Care Planning, placement and case review June 2015
- Fostering Services Regulations 2011
- Fostering Minimum Standards

Supporting Documents

- SMBC Permanence Policy
- SMBC Fostering Panel Policy & Procedures
- SMBC Connected Person/Reg 24 policy
- SMBC Placement Plan Part 1 and Part 2- Delegated Authority
- SMBC Staying Put Policy
- SMBC Disruption Policy

Quality Assurance

Policy Review 12 months

Approved by Chris McLoughlin, Service Director, Child Safeguarding and Prevention Services

Implementation Date: 13th February 2007

Review Date: April 2021

Version	Date	Authors	Issue Reason	Revision Date
1	01.12.04			
1.1	13.02.06			13.02.07
1.2	03.06.09	Vaunda Taylor (Team Manager, Fostering) Angela Daniel (Policy Officer)	Minor Amendments	03.06.09
1.3	21.5.12	Vaunda Taylor (Team Manager, Fostering)	Minor Amendments	21.5.13
1.4	25.4.14	Vaunda Taylor (Team Manager, Fostering)	Minor Amendments	25.4.15
1.5	25.11.16	Zoe Knipe (Team Manager Fostering)	Changes as a result of Care Planning, placement and case review June 2015	25.11.17
1.6	11.4.18	Jane Parsons (Team Manager Fostering)	Minor amendments to clarify 6 month Stat visits/EIS administration/PPM Part 2	11.4.19 or when Liquid Logic implemented.
1.7	1.4.20	Rosie Foster (Family Finder Fostering)	Minor amendments re: Liquid Logic.	1.4.21

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Family Finding and Matching Policy – Permanent Foster Placements

This policy replaces the previous policy “Family Finding and Foster Placements”. It has been updated to clarify the distinction between long term foster placements and permanent foster placements in SMBC. It also defines the decision making processes and procedures for permanent foster placements.

1. Background

The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations Vol 2: care planning, placement and case review June 2015, states, “for those children who remain looked-after, an important route to permanence is long-term foster care.”

See Appendix 4 The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations Vol 2: care planning, placement and case review June 2015.

Permanent Fostering is distinguished in SMBC from long term fostering.

We have a legal requirement to report to the Department of Education and Ofsted, which placements are permanent (Ofsted POF1) and which placements are long term (Ofsted PF02).

Any historical “Long Term” placements matched via the SMBC Fostering Panel, and signed off by the SMBC Agency Decision Maker, have been designated as Permanent Foster Placements by SMBC.

Children’s Social Workers, (prior to the implementation of Liquid Logic), should seek advice from Fostering Family Finder or Business Support to ensure their child’s placement is accurately designated on Liquid Logic.

It should be noted that SMBC has always implemented best practice and many of the processes and procedures that are defined in this updated policy have been embedded in practice for a number of years. The policy has been updated to adhere to requirements and standardise terminology to minimise confusion and delay.

2. SMBC Definitions

Long term foster placement

A long term foster placement refers to a placement in which a child may have remained for some time (perhaps due to attempts at rehabilitation or court processes), and where it has been agreed the child will remain for the foreseeable future. However, the child's placement has not been assessed and agreed as permanent through a formal matching process or by recommendation of the Fostering Panel.

This is most likely to be the case with young people over the age of 14, who may have entered the care system in adolescence, and who may retain strong links with their birth family and do not want make a formal commitment to their foster family.

All practitioners will be aware of a very small number of placements which fall within this category. They will know from experience that if the procedures were followed to formally match the placement and make it a permanent placement, especially contrary to the wishes of the child or the birth family, the matching process could have a destabilising effect possibly resulting in placement breakdown.

Placements designated long term should be the exception, as the expectation is if the permanence plan for the child is to be achieved through long term foster care, this should be a permanent foster placement.

Foster Carers should be approved as long term carers for long term foster placements.

Children or young people whose placement falls into the category of long term foster placement must have this plan confirmed by Care Planning Meeting, and ratified by IROs in Statutory LAC review and a Management Decision placed on the child and carer's file.

The Management Decisions should record frequency of Child's Social Worker Statutory visits, LAC reviews, delegated responsibility and agreed support.

The child's Social Worker needs to ensure the placement is accurately recorded as long term on Liquid Logic.

Should the young person wish to remain in placement after their 18th birthday, SMBC Staying Put policy will fully apply so as not to discriminate against the young people or foster carers.

Permanent foster placement

A permanent foster placement is one which has been assessed and formally agreed as permanent following a formal matching process including recommendation by the Fostering Panel, and agreement by Agency Decision Maker.

Such placements are matched based on the child's needs and the skills, aptitudes and ability of the carers to meet these. It is expected that the child will remain in foster placement up to the age of 18, but also that there will be an enduring commitment to the young person into adulthood. This is likely to include a Staying Put arrangement and the carer's commitment is expected to continue after the young person has achieved independent living arrangements.

The carers identified as suitable to meet the permanent needs of the child may be the current short-term placement, or a new placement identified for the child as a result of a Family Finding exercise.

The process to be followed to achieve a permanent placement is shown in the flow chart for permanent foster care.

The key points are:

The Care Plan agrees plan for permanence (or permanence plan) as permanent foster care.

The Plan is ratified or challenged by the IRO in LAC Recommendations.

The profiling and matching process is completed.

The match is presented to the Fostering Panel for recommendation.

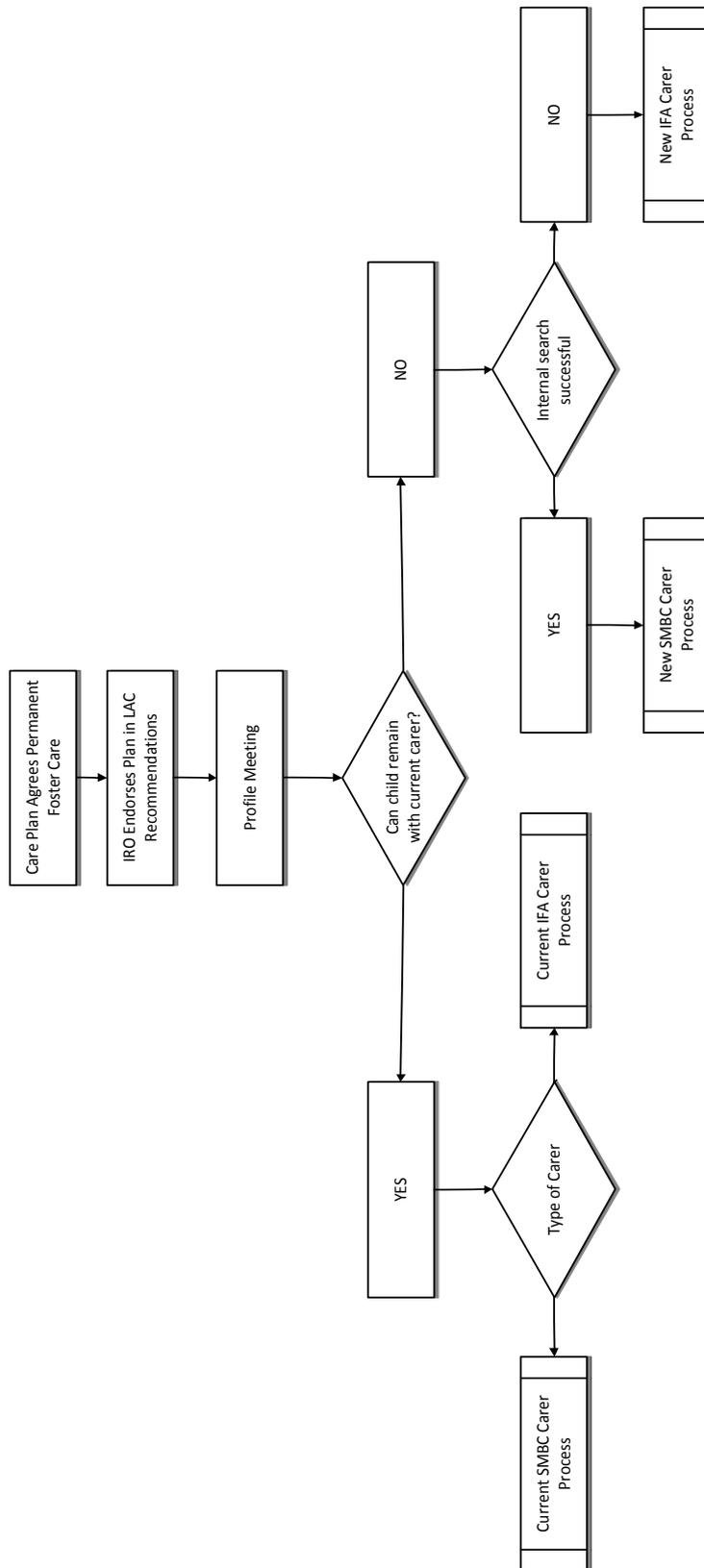
The decision about the suitability of the match is made by the Agency Decision Maker on receipt of the appropriate paperwork and Panel recommendation.

Should the young person wish to remain in placement after their 18th birthday, SMBC Staying Put policy will fully apply.

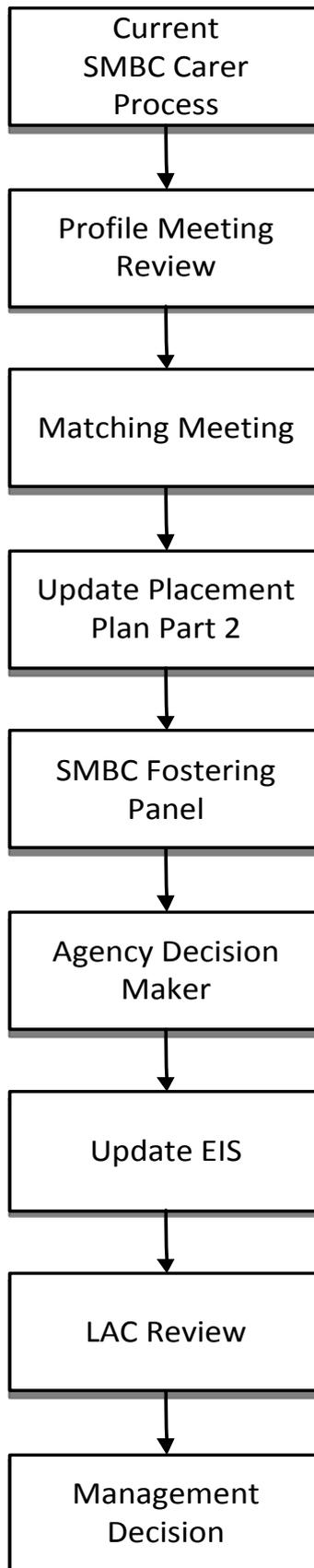
When children are accommodated under s20 of the 1989 Children Act, and rehabilitation to the birth family is not feasible, consideration needs to be given to achieving permanence through permanent foster care. Careful consideration needs to be given to these cases, and legal advice sought where necessary.

3. Flowcharts for Permanent Foster Care

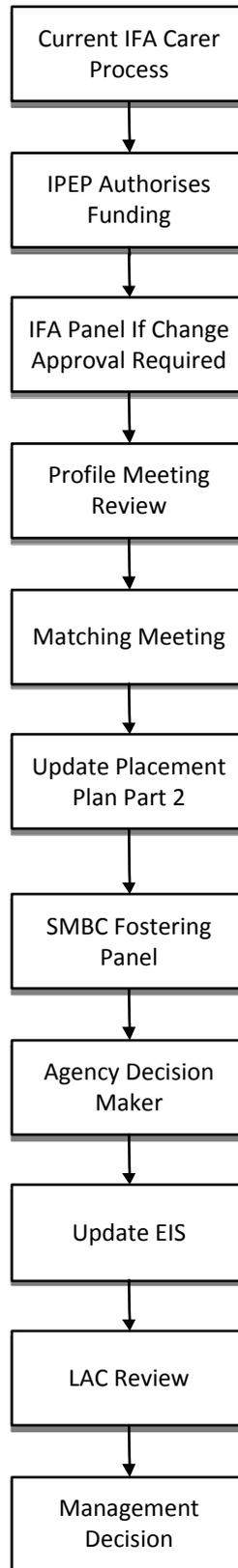
3.1 Process Selection Flowchart



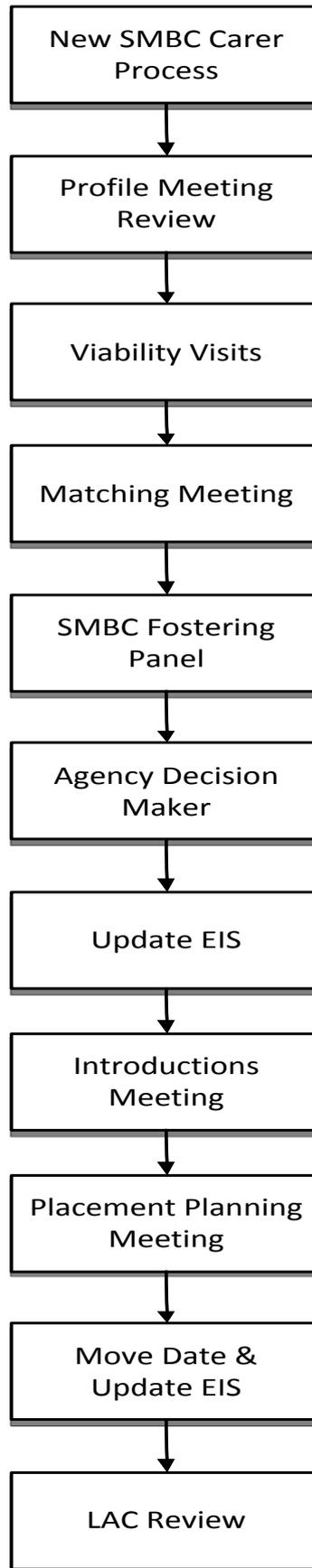
3.2 Current SMBC Carer Flowchart



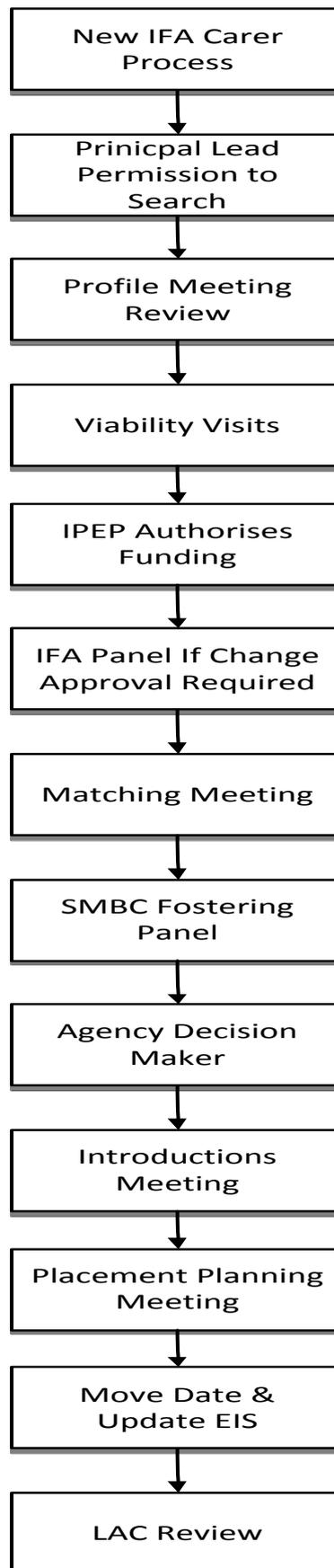
3.3 Current IFA Carer Flowchart



3.4 New SMBC Carer Flowchart



3.5 New IFA Carer Flowchart



4. Family finding Process for Permanent Foster Care

Child's Social Worker should inform Fostering Team Manager that child's Care Planning meeting, chaired by a Service Manager, has agreed and documented a permanence plan of permanent foster care is to be made.

The Family Finder will co-ordinate a Profile meeting. The Profile meeting must be chaired, wherever possible, by a Fostering Team Manager or Fostering Team Senior Practitioner. Fostering Team Manager will advise Social Worker if a referral and risk assessment is required.

5. Profile Meeting

The Family Finder, Social Worker, Foster Carer, Supervising Social Worker, Residential Worker, Virtual School Team (VST) and any other professional with considerable knowledge of the child/young person should be invited. Consideration should be given to including the young person/birth family wherever this is appropriate.

The child's social worker Social Worker should complete four actions prior to the Profile Meeting.

Provide evidence in writing that they have consulted and advised the birth parents, or anyone who has parental responsibility, of the plan for permanent foster care, and sought their agreement in writing if s20.

Consult with the child or young person in an age appropriate manner to ascertain their views for the meeting. If the child or young person is of sufficient age and understanding consideration should be given to the Family Finder meeting with them directly and/or for them attending the Profiling meeting.

Complete all identified sections of the Profile Report for Permanent Fostering prior to the Profile meeting.

Provide up-to-date photographs of the child.

The Profile Report for Permanent Fostering form replaces, but includes all elements of the old Form E and CPR (Child's Permanence Report).

See Appendix 1 - Profile Report for Permanent Fostering Form F87/1

The meeting will draw up a clear and realistic Profile of the child's current and future needs, and a list of the qualities and abilities the future carers will ideally have (the "job description").

It is important to be focused on the outcome wanted for the child and to be able to support any of the requirements e.g. it is not acceptable to assume all children/young people require heterosexual/same heritage carers. In some cases this will be absolutely appropriate but not in others.

The child's identified needs in relation to their ethnicity, culture, gender, sexuality, religion and any additional needs arising from a disability should be made clear in the profile.

VST will be responsible for co-ordinating the educational needs of the child or young person, identifying a school placement and where this is necessary liaison with Special Educational Needs (SEN) Service.

It is important that the child/young person's views are sought, to discover what is important to them. This work is the responsibility of the Social Worker but can be undertaken in conjunction with the carer, with input if appropriate from the Family Finder. It should be part of the life story and preparation work.

Every effort should be made to involve the birth family in this process. Where this is not possible, the issues should be recorded for the child's later understanding.

At the Profile Meeting agreement should be reached as to how often key personnel will meet to consider progress and incorporate any new information as part of report's Action plan.

Profile report to be updated after meeting, with any new information by Family Finder/ Social Worker.

6. Family Finding for Approved SMBC/IFA Carers already caring for the child

If a match is to be taken forward with an existing SMBC or existing AGREED IFA carer, regardless of how long the child has been in their care, this will need formalising through the Fostering Panel. Some carers may find this intrusive but it is important to explain that this is aimed at ensuring the placement is supported and agreed as permanent.

Funding for a permanent foster placement with IFA Carers needs to be agreed and documented on child's file via IPEP (Integrated Placements and Education Panel), in advance of Matching meeting. This is separate to the approval from the Principal Lead to undertake the IFA search which resulted in the child being placed with the carer in the first place. The IFA Funding authorisation for permanence needs to be evidenced in Match for Permanent Fostering Report.

Although a permanent foster placement with an existing carer may appear as a foregone conclusion to all concerned, particularly for those children who have been in placement for some time, it is crucial to profile the child first before making a final recommendation and presenting match to the Fostering Panel.

After the Profile meeting the Family Finder should coordinate the Matching meeting, (previously known as Linking Meeting) to complete Match for Permanent Fostering Report.

See Appendix 2 - Match for Permanent Fostering Report

Matching Meeting

This meeting should always be chaired by a Fostering Team Manager. Attendees should include Family Finder, Social Worker, Foster Carers, and Supervising Social Worker as a minimum.

The Match for Permanent Fostering Report forms the Agenda for the Matching meeting, and should be completed by Family Finder. Evidence of IRO endorsement of proposed match should be included in Report. This should normally be detailed in LAC Chair's Recommendations.

The report should clearly explain why the Carers are considered a suitable match for a particular child/young person, and if changes to approval are required.

Foster Carers' approval status.

If SMBC Carers are currently only approved as Short Term/Respite Carers/Short Breaks Carers, an Annual review will need to be undertaken to

request Change of Approval to Permanent, and presented to the Fostering Panel with the match for Permanent Fostering.

If IFA Carers are currently only approved as Short Term/Respite or Short Breaks Carers a change of approval to long term needs to be considered by IFA's own Fostering Panel, and should be confirmed by IFA Agency Decision Maker prior to Matching meeting taking place.

If Carers are already approved as Long Term or Permanent Foster Carers the Family Finder should provide copy of Carers' latest Foster Carer Annual Review, and copy of Fostering Panel minutes to the Matching meeting. The Family Finder should ensure that Supervising Social Worker for the Foster Carers provides an update to the meeting since last Annual Review, especially regarding any outstanding matters from Fostering Panel minutes.

The Supervising Social Worker should also confirm their, and if appropriate their IFA's agreement, to the match.

The Matching meeting, chaired by the Fostering Team Manager should discuss the capacity of the carer/s to continue to look after and support the child or young person into adulthood. The meeting should also consider current support needs and how these are going to be met.

This support should be documented in Assessment of Child's Needs for Support Services in Foster Care/Residential Homes form.

See Appendix 3 - Assessment of Child's Needs for Support Services in Foster Care/Residential Homes form.

It is important from a support point of view that Carers clearly understand that if permanently matched they will continue to have a Supervising Social Worker, and any existing meetings such as LAC reviews will continue to ensure the success and stability of the placement.

An updated Placement Planning Meeting Part 2 must be held to reflect the change of status of the placement to a permanent placement. In some instances this can be held in conjunction with the Matching Meeting, or as soon as possible after Agency Decision Maker's approval of the permanent match.

Child's Social Worker must complete new PPM Part 2 Delegated Responsibility, authorised on Liquid Logic, to reflect placement's permanent status. It should be very carefully considered to ensure children do not miss out on opportunities that enable them to experience a fulfilled childhood and feel part of their foster Carer's family.

In such cases, where the decision to seek permanent foster carers has been arrived at due to an adoptive family not being available, then application should be made to revoke the Placement Order. Good practice would be to revoke the Placement Order as soon as it becomes apparent that adoption

will not be achieved, and prior to the match for permanent fostering being presented to the Fostering Panel.

If all are in agreement with recommending the Permanent match to Fostering Panel, Family Finder should book into next available Fostering Panel.

Fostering Panel Document Checklist: Permanent Fostering

- Match for Permanent Fostering Report, (this is the summary of the matter for Panel members), on the child and carers file.
- Profile Report for Permanent Fostering Form F87/1, on child's file.
- Foster Carer's latest Annual Review
- Panel Minutes from last Annual Review
- Assessment of Child's Needs for Support Services in Foster Care/Residential Homes form, on child's file, any child age 8 years and above.

Family Finder, Social Worker, both Carers if applicable and Supervising Social Worker are expected to attend Fostering Panel.

Child/Young Person is encouraged and welcome to attend, depending upon their age and level of understanding. Where a child chooses not to attend Panel consideration should be given to how they may be involved in the process i.e. provide something in writing/picture.

When the Permanent Match is recommended by the Fostering Panel and agreed by the Agency Decision Maker, the placement is re-designated as Permanent. Letters will be sent to both the carers and to the child/children advising them of the decision.

Panel administrator will update SMBC Carer's approval on Liquid Logic to permanent as per date in Agency Decision Makers letter.

Business Support will monitor and advise child's Social Worker to also complete electronic Movement Form in Liquid Logic for child, updating placement type on system, from date of Agency Decision Makers letter.

Child's Social Worker should complete the following actions,

Update Liquid Logic with a Movement Form to change designation of child's placement, from date of Agency Decision Makers letter.

Advise birth family as appropriate, and anyone who has parental responsibility, in writing of the decision.

Convene updating Placement Planning Meeting, if this has not already taken place.

Family Finder involvement ceases.

Further actions

Changes of frequency of Child's Social Worker Statutory visits and LAC reviews, changes in Delegated Authority should be further discussed and agreed at LAC review after Agency Decision Makers letter.

Any changes should be dated and electronically documented in Liquid Logic on a Management Decision Form on child and Carers file.

7. Family Finding for New Permanent Foster Placement

If a child cannot remain with the current Carer, the Social Worker should contact Fostering Team Manager for a Family Finder to be allocated to find a new placement.

The Family Finder will co-ordinate a Profiling meeting. The Profiling meeting must be chaired, wherever possible, by a Fostering Team Manager or Fostering Team Senior Practitioner.

Profile Meeting

The Family Finder, Social Worker, Current Foster Carers, Supervising Social Worker, Residential Worker, Virtual School Team (VST) and any other professional with considerable knowledge of the child/young person should be invited. Consideration should be given to including the young person/birth family wherever this is appropriate.

The child's social worker Social Worker should complete four actions prior to the Profile Meeting.

Provide evidence in writing that they have consulted and advised the birth parents, or anyone who has parental responsibility, of the plan for permanent foster care, and sought their agreement in writing if s20.

Consult with the child or young person in an age appropriate manner to ascertain their views for the meeting. If the child or young person is of sufficient age and understanding consideration should be given to the Family Finder meeting with them directly and/or for them attending the Profiling meeting.

Complete all identified sections of the Profile Report for Permanent Fostering prior to the Profile meeting.

Provide up-to-date photographs of the child.

The Profile Report for Permanent Fostering replaces, but includes all elements of the old Form E and CPR (Child's Permanence Report).

See Appendix 1 - Profile Report for Permanent Fostering Form F87/1

The child's social worker must have consulted with the child or young person in an age-appropriate manner to ascertain their views for the meeting. If the child or young person is of sufficient age and understanding consideration should be given to the Family Finder meeting with them directly and/or for them attending the Profiling meeting.

The meeting will draw up a clear and realistic Profile of the child's current and future needs, and a list of the qualities and abilities the future carers will ideally have (the "job description").

It is important to be focused on the outcome wanted for the child and to be able to support any of the requirements e.g. it is not acceptable to assume all children/young people require heterosexual/same heritage carers. In some cases, this will be absolutely appropriate but not in others.

The child's identified needs in relation to their ethnicity, culture, gender, sexuality, religion and any additional needs arising from a disability should be made clear in the profile.

VST will be responsible for co-ordinating the educational needs of the child or young person, identifying a school placement and where this is necessary liaison with Special Educational Needs (SEN) Service.

It is important that the child/young person's views are sought, to discover what is important to them. This work is the responsibility of the Social Worker but can be undertaken in conjunction with the carer, with input if appropriate from the Family Finder. It should be part of the life story and preparation work.

Every effort should be made to involve the birth family in this process, where this is not possible the issues should be recorded for the child's later understanding.

At the Profiling Meeting agreement should be reached as to how often key personnel will meet to consider progress and incorporate any new information as part of report's Action Plan. .

Profile report to be updated after meeting with any new information by Family Finder/ Social Worker.

The Family Finder and the child's Social Worker are jointly responsible for ensuring that a proactive and thorough family finding strategy is developed and implemented to minimise delay.

The Family Finder will ensure that the recruitment Social Workers receive a copy of the Profile so that any prospective new applicants can be identified at the earliest opportunity.

Family Finder to circulate Profile to Supervising Social Workers. Any potential in-house placements to be identified and discussed at the Fostering Team Meeting.

If it is possible to identify a potential match, the Form F and latest Annual Review and Panel minutes should be read by the Family Finder and Child's Social Worker. The Child's Profile will be considered by the prospective carer's Supervising Social Worker.

If there is more than one possible match, a short list will be drawn up. The Social Worker, Family Finder and where appropriate the carer and other workers who attended the Profiling meeting, will take part in this. It is good practice for a short-listing meeting to be chaired by a Team Manager from either the fieldwork or fostering team and wherever possible, both to provide a degree of objective oversight to the process and to fulfil a quality assurance role in ensuring that all relevant information has been provided about the prospective carers and the child.

All internal vacancies should be considered by the Family Finder. The reasons for discounting any potential matches must be clear and available to the Social Worker and Team Managers.

The aim is to match children/young people with foster carers who best meet their needs. Wherever possible this will be with a family which:

- Reflects their ethnic origin, cultural background, religion and language
- Allows them to live with brothers and sisters unless this is contrary to the care plan
- Meets the child's identified needs and promotes positive outcomes
- Where a child or young person cannot be matched with a family which reflects the above every effort to find an alternative family will be made, to secure a permanent foster placement for the child

If the placement seems viable, the Social Worker, and Family Finder will visit the identified potential family to provide more details about the child. It is expected their Supervising Social Worker would also be present.

If it is decided not to proceed with the possible match at the conclusion of this visit, the process should be repeated until a suitable match is identified.

If this visit is successful and all involved still wish to proceed with the potential match, then a second visit should be undertaken by Social Worker with the child's Foster Carer.

Following the visits to the prospective carers, if the match is considered appropriate a formal matching meeting will take place which the Family Finder will coordinate.

In some cases, it may be difficult to identify a family as a good match for the child. In these circumstances a meeting may be arranged, chaired by a Team Manager and involving the child's Social Worker and the relevant Supervising Social Workers, to look at issues.

If it is agreed there are no suitable in-house Carers, Family Finder/Social Worker will need to advise Team Managers and widen the search.

Permission for an IFA search must be given in writing from the Principal Lead.

If specific advertising is required for the young person a Profile/advert should be drawn up. This should be approved by Social Worker. If external costs are involved, this needs to be authorised by child's Social Worker's and Fostering Service Managers.

Family Finder/Social Worker will provide full details to Placements team who will undertake IFA search.

Family Finder and Social Worker will review Form Fs, Annual Reviews, Panel minutes for prospective Carers, draw up a short list and agree which Carers to visit.

Once a potential match has been identified, agreement to fund an IFA permanent match must be gained in writing via IPEP, and documented on child's file, prior to Matching meeting and recommendation to Fostering Panel.

This is separate approval from Principal Lead's permission to undertake IFA search. The IFA Funding authorisation needs to be evidenced in Match for Permanent Fostering Report.

If IFA Carers are currently only approved as Short Term/Respite or Short Breaks Carers a change of approval to long term needs to be considered by IFA's own Fostering Panel, and should be confirmed by IFA Agency Decision Maker prior to Matching meeting taking place.

The process for recommending match to SMBC Fostering Panel is then the same as Family Finding for Approved SMBC/IFA Carers already caring for the child.

Matching Meeting

Family Finder should coordinate the Matching meeting, (previously sometimes referred to as a Linking Meeting), to complete Match for Permanent Fostering Report. This meeting should always be chaired by a Team Manager. Attendees should include Family Finder, Social Worker and current and prospective Carers, Supervising Social Workers. The Match for Permanent Fostering Report forms the Agenda for the Matching meeting, and should be completed by Family Finder.

See Appendix 2 - Match for Permanent Fostering Report

Prior to the meeting invitations being issued, consideration should be given to whether both sets of carers attend all of the meeting; it will usually be more sensitive for existing Carers to attend only part of the meeting, to ensure confidentiality of prospective Carers.

The Matching report should clearly explain why the Carers are considered a suitable match for a particular child/young person, and if changes to approval are required.

Any SMBC Foster Carers who are to be matched permanently will be approved as Permanent Foster Carers. If Carers are currently only approved as Short Term/Respite Carers, an Annual review will need to be undertaken to request Change of Approval to Permanent, and presented to the Fostering Panel with the match for Permanent Fostering.

Please note for IFA Carers, approval needs to be long term and should have been confirmed by the IFA Agency Decision Maker prior to the Matching meeting.

If SMBC Carers are already approved as Long Term or Permanent Foster Carers the Family Finder should provide copy of prospective Carers' latest Foster Carer Annual Review, and copy of Fostering Panel minutes to the meeting. The Family Finder should ensure that Supervising Social Worker for the Foster Carers provides an update to the meeting since last Annual Review, especially regarding any outstanding matters from Fostering Panel minutes.

The Supervising Social Worker should confirm their, and if appropriate their IFA's, agreement to the match.

Matching Report should also provide Evidence of IRO endorsement of proposed match.

The Matching meeting, chaired by the Team Manager, should discuss the capacity of the carer to continue to look after the child or young person into adulthood. The meeting should also consider current support needs and how these are going to be met. This should be documented in Assessment of Child's Needs for Support Services in Foster Care/Residential Homes form.

See Appendix 3 Assessment of Child's Needs for Support Services in Foster Care/Residential Homes form.

It is important from a support point of view that Carers clearly understand that if permanently matched they will continue to have a Supervising Social Worker, and any existing meetings such as LAC reviews will continue to ensure the success and stability of the placement.

If all are in agreement with recommending Permanent match to Fostering Panel, Family Finder should book into next available Fostering Panel.

Fostering Panel Document Checklist: Permanent Fostering

- Match for Permanent Fostering Report, (this is the summary of the matter for Panel members), on child and carer's file.
- Profile Report for Permanent Fostering Form F87/1, on child's file.

- Foster Carer's latest Annual Review, or complete form F if recently approved.
- Panel Minutes from last Annual Review.

- Assessment of Child's Needs for Support Services in Foster Care/Residential Homes form, on child's file, for any child age 8 years and above.

Family Finder, Social Worker, both prospective Carers if applicable and Supervising Social Worker are expected to attend Fostering Panel.

When the Permanent Match is recommended by Fostering Panel and agreed by Agency Decision Maker, the Panel administrator will update SMBC Carer's approval on Liquid Logic. A letter will be sent to the Carers and child confirming this.

The child's social worker should write to birth parents and anyone with parental responsibility to advise them of the decision.

Following the Agency Decision Maker's agreement, the placement move can proceed.

If for any reason the proposed match is not recommended by the Fostering Panel, and the Agency Decision Maker agrees with the Panel's recommendation, the Family Finding process starts again.

8. Introductions Meeting

Every child or young person has the right to be prepared sensitively and thoroughly for a foster placement. This will include ensuring that a copy of the children and young people's guide to fostering is given and that they are supported in reading and understanding this. The level of the young person's understanding should be recorded.

The child's Social Worker, current carers and prospective carers and their Supervising Social Worker, Family Finder, VST and other relevant professionals will meet to plan a programme of introductions. It is the Child's Social Workers' responsibility to prepare the child for the move. The meeting will also consider any contact arrangements, and plan for the new carers to meet birth family members if appropriate.

A date for the Placement Planning Meeting will also be agreed at this stage, before the introductions start.

An introductions plan should be made that looks at the practical arrangements to help the child /young person learn about their new placement and assist the new carers to learn about the child's routines, likes and dislikes and how best to help the child/young person transfer to his/her new placement.

Within the introductions process the following principles will be upheld:

- child's Social Worker should be present when the child meets their new foster family for the first time, this meeting will be held at the current Foster Carer's house.
- When the child/ren visit their new home for the first time they need to be accompanied by their Foster Carers and/or Social Worker.
- The exact length of introductions will vary depending on each child's individual needs.
- Either on the first or second day of the introductions the Supervising Social Worker will contact the Foster Carers to check that they remain confident that the match is right for them and that they are able to meet the immediate and long term needs of the child/young person.
- The child's Social Worker/Family Finder will remain in regular contact with all to ensure that the introductions are proceeding at the pace that meets the child's needs.

Mid-point review

Mid-way through the introductions a Mid-Point review will be held to review how the introductions are going. This meeting will consider the views of all parties and regular contact will have been maintained with everyone by the Social worker/Family Finder through out the introductions.

The meeting will:

- review progress
- check whether pace of introductions is appropriate
- assess impact on child/young person and on new family

It is essential that any party is able to voice doubts or concerns at this stage.

The Mid-point review will confirm The Move Date.

A Placement Planning Meeting must be held prior to child moving.

Part 2 Delegated Responsibility should be carefully considered to ensure children do not miss out on opportunities that enable them to experience a fulfilled childhood and feel part of their foster Carer's family.

Child's Social Worker must complete new PPM Part 2 Delegated Responsibility, authorised on Liquid Logic. The delegated authority should reflect the placement's permanent status.

The child's Social Worker must provide all relevant paperwork e.g. LAC forms, including medical consent, to the new carer, before the placement commences.

Child's Social worker to complete electronic movement form on Liquid Logic for Move Day, and ensure placement designated as permanent.

Family Finder will monitor, and ensure this action is completed.

The child's Social Worker must visit within 1 week of placement. See further visiting patterns in section 10.

A Statutory LAC Review is required within 20 working days of placement.

The support plan must be reviewed regularly at least as part of the statutory review or more frequently if necessary and amended as required in order to enhance the stability of the placement.

Once a placement has been made, the role of the Family Finder will cease.

9. Connected Persons

The assessment of the family and friends/connected persons foster carer contains all information regarding the child, birth family and prospective carers required by the Fostering Panel to approve permanent match.

The assessing social worker must make prospective carers aware of SMBC Staying Put Policy, and the assessment must confirm Carers understanding of permanent foster care and their commitment to the child into adulthood.

The Fostering Panel will consider the permanent match when considering the approval of the prospective family and friends/ connected person's carer approval.

If the match is recommended to, and approved by the Agency Decision Maker, this will be considered a Permanent Foster Placement, unless otherwise stated e.g. as a short term placement.

When the Permanent Match is agreed by the Agency Decision Maker, Panel administrator will update Carers records on Liquid Logic, designating placement as permanent, unless otherwise stated.

Child's Social worker to complete electronic movement form in Liquid Logic to ensure child's record also reflects this change. Panel administrator/Business Support will monitor, and ensure this action is completed.

A letter will be sent to carers and the child/children to advise them of the change in status of the placement.

Child's Social Worker is to confirm in writing decision to parents and /or person with parental authority.

An updated Placement Planning meeting Part 2 should be undertaken to reflect the changes in the status of the placement to permanent foster care. A new Placement Plan Part 2 must be completed and authorised on Liquid Logic to evidence any changes to Delegated Authority.

Frequency of Statutory Social Worker Visits

If the child is placed with a Connected Person with temporary approval (i.e. before full approval), visits must take place at least once a week until the first Looked After Review, thereafter at intervals of not more than 4 weeks.

Once formally approved as permanent by the Agency Decision Maker, visits can be every 6 weeks, and after first year of placement Social Worker can consider further reduction in visits providing placement meets requirements for reduction in visits.

10. Visits to Looked After Children in Foster Care by Child's Social Worker

Guidance

As part of their arrangements for supervising the child's welfare the responsible authority has a duty to appoint a representative to visit the child wherever he or she is living. Visits form part of a broader framework for supervising the child's placement and ensuring that his/her welfare continues to be safeguarded and promoted. Visits therefore have a number of purposes, including to:

- Support the development of a good relationship between child and social worker which will enable the child to share his/her experiences, both positive and negative, within the placement.
- To provide opportunity to talk to the child and to offer reassurance if he/she feels isolated and vulnerable while away from family and friends.
- Evaluate and monitor the achievements of actions and outcomes in the care and placement plan and to contribute to the review of the plan.
- Identify any difficulties which the child or Carer may be experiencing, to provide advice on appropriately responding to the child's behaviour and identify additional support and services are needed.
- Monitor contact arrangements, to identify how the child is responding to them and identify any additional support carers need to support positive contact arrangements.

The 2010 Regulations set out the minimum visiting requirements for the child's Social Worker and must be understood in the broader context of the purpose of the visits.

Frequency of visits.

Visiting requirements differ according to type of placements.

The child should be visited within one week of the start of the child's first placement and within one week of the start of any subsequent placement.

Thereafter the child must be visited at intervals of not more than six weeks for the **first year of any placement**.

Thereafter, at intervals of not more than six weeks (or 3 months if the placement is intended to last until the child is 18) **providing**

the placement has been designated long term in a CPM, or a permanent foster placement by the Fostering Panel and the Agency Decision Maker.

The following only applies to Permanent foster placements, and not long term placements.

Frequency of visits must take into account the permanent nature of the placement, and also the support needs of the child and the Carers.

In exceptional circumstances after the first year of a **permanent placement**, where a placement is very settled, visits during the subsequent years could be changed to intervals of not more than six months, where the child, being of sufficient age and understanding, has agreed to be visited at this minimum frequency. Social workers must remain flexible and responsive to the child's and carers' needs.

To reduce visit frequency to 6 months

The child must have been in a permanent placement for a period of over 12 months.

The child's placement must have been approved as permanent by the Fostering Panel.

The placement must be deemed to be stable or very stable at the time of the request.

Initially the child's social worker should discuss the proposal with the appropriate Fostering Team manager/supervising social worker and agree the merits of progressing such a proposal.

The social worker must seek the views of all agencies involved with the child, including health and education and record their views on Liquid Logic. The social worker must consult the child, foster carer and parents independently of each other regarding their views.

Significant attempts must be made to locate the parent(s) in order for their views to be gained, should the social worker be unable to locate the parents, evidence of their attempts should be recorded on Liquid Logic.

Following this the social worker should discuss the plan to request the reduction in visits with their team manager.

Discussion should focus on the ability of the carers to meet the child's needs alongside a reduction in frequency of visits, as well as the child's ability to access independent support should he or she require it. Any risk factors should also be discussed such as any Missing From Home episodes.

Consideration should also take place regarding whether any other permanency options should be pursued such as Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement Orders.

The Team Manager must ratify any proposal and record their decision on Liquid Logic.

The social worker must then inform the IRO of their request to review the visit frequency. This should be done at least 6 weeks in advance of the next LAC review in order to afford the Reviewing Officer the opportunity to discuss the proposals independently with the Fostering team/young person/Foster Carers and parents, if deemed appropriate.

The IRO will subsequently discuss the proposal in full within the LAC review and ratify the plan accordingly in the LAC Chairs Review Recommendations. Should any party disagree with the proposed reduction, the reasons behind their objection will be discussed in full and considered within decision making. At this time the Social Worker must update the child's Care Plan setting out the reasons for any agreed reduction in visits.

The child and Carers have to formally agree to reduce visiting frequency and a Management Decision documenting reasons and agreement placed on child and Carers' file.

A Management Decision is also required as currently Liquid Logic will not support the concept of 6 monthly social worker statutory visits, and therefore visits will be flagged as out of time.

The frequency of visits should always be determined by the circumstances of the case and the Local Authority must arrange a visit whenever reasonably requested by a child or foster carer regardless of the status of the placement.

Supervising social workers will continue to conduct their 6 weekly statutory supervision visits.

If a child is allocated a new Social Worker, the Team Manager should ensure a visit to the child is undertaken, and frequency of visits is reviewed to reflect the change in social worker. A Management Decision should be placed on file documenting the frequency of visits, and this should be monitored carefully.

11. Other points to be noted

LAC Reviews-permanent foster placements

Reviews for children in permanent placements need sensitive handling to ensure the permanency of the situation is recognised and that the child's needs are paramount. Consideration regarding the frequency, venue and attendees of LAC Reviews should be agreed as part of reviewing process.

At Stockport in order for a Looked After Child review of arrangements to consider a proposal for a reduction in review frequency for permanent foster placements, the following criteria must be met:

The child must have been in placement for a period of over 12 months.

The child's placement must have been approved as Permanent by the Fostering Panel.

The placement must be deemed to be stable or very stable at the time of the request.

Initially the child's social worker should discuss the proposal with the appropriate Fostering Team manager/supervising social worker and agree the merits of progressing such a proposal.

The social worker must seek the views of all agencies involved with the child, including health and education and record their views on Liquid Logic. The social worker must consult the child, foster carer and parents independently of each other regarding their views.

Significant attempt must be made to locate the parent(s) in order for their views to be gained, should the social worker be unable to locate the parents, evidence of their attempts should be recorded on Liquid Logic.

Following this the social worker should discuss the plan to request the reduction in reviews with their team manager.

Discussion should focus on the ability of the carers to meet the child's needs alongside a reduction in frequency of formal reviews, as well as the child's ability to access independent support should he or she require it. Any risk factors should also be discussed such as any Missing From Home episodes. Consideration should also take place regarding whether any other permanency options should be pursued such as Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement Orders.

The Team Manager must ratify any proposal and record their decision on Liquid Logic.

The social worker must then inform the IRO of their request to review the LAC review frequency. This should be done at least 6 weeks in advance of the next LAC review in order to afford the reviewing officer the opportunity to discuss the proposals independently with the Fostering team/young person/Foster Carers and parents, if deemed appropriate.

The IRO will subsequently discuss the proposal in full within the LAC review and ratify the plan accordingly. Should any party disagree with the proposed reduction the reasons behind their objection will be discussed in full and considered within decision making. At this time the Social Worker must update the child's Care Plan setting out the reasons for any agreed reduction in LAC review frequency. Following ratification the IRO will continue to consult professionals and review the Care Plan on a 6 monthly basis and a formal meeting will take place annually.

Leaving Care

Leaving care practice must be flexible and sensitive to each young person and their foster and birth families. Leaving care workers must understand and respect each young person's history and Plan, and have a clear understanding of SMBC Staying Put Policy.

Disruptions

It is important that permanent placements that are under stress are given the same attention and support that would be given to a birth family or adoptive family.

Social worker and supervising social worker must seek management advice regarding appropriate course of action, which should be recorded in a Management Decision. Consideration should be given to calling Care Planning meeting, Professionals meetings, or Safeguarding for Looked After Child meeting, to identify concerns and what support can be put in place where there is a high level of instability in the placement.

Unless there are concerns for the safety of the child or the carer's own children or other children in the family any move should be carefully planned.

If the placement breaks down a Disruption meeting may need to be held in line with SMBC Disruption policy.

12. Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Profile Report for Permanent Fostering Form F87/1
- Appendix 2 - Match for Permanent Fostering Report F88
- Appendix 3 - Assessment of Child's Needs for Support Services in Foster Care/Residential Homes form.
- Appendix 4 Fostering Minimum Standards
- Appendix 5 The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations Vol 2: care planning, placement and case review June 2015.

APPENDIX 4 Fostering Minimum Standards

STANDARD 11 - Preparation for a placement

Underpinning Legislation:

11 – Independent fostering agencies – duty to secure welfare
Children Act 1989:

Section 22 – General duty of local authority in relation to children looked after by them

Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations (2010):

Regulation 22 – Conditions to be complied with before placing a child with a local authority foster parent.

Outcome:

Children are welcomed into the foster home and leave the foster home in a planned and sensitive manner which makes them feel loved and valued.

Children feel part of the family. They are not treated differently to the foster carer's own children living in the household. The child's needs are met and they benefit from a stable placement.

11.1) The service has and implements clear procedures for introducing children into the foster care placement, to the foster carer and to others living in the household, which cover planned and, where permitted, emergency/immediate foster care placements. They help children understand what to expect from living in the foster home.

11.2) Children are carefully matched to a foster placement. Foster carers have full information about the child (as set out in standard 3.9).

11.3) Unless an emergency placement makes it impossible, children are given information about the foster carer before arrival, and any information they

need or reasonably request about the placement, (including, where appropriate, photographic information), in a format appropriate to their age and understanding. Wherever possible, children are able to visit the foster carer's home and to talk with the foster carer in private prior to a placement decision being made. Children can bring their favourite possessions into the foster carer's home.

11.4) Children are given free access to the household facilities as would be consistent with reasonable arrangements in a family home. Foster carers explain everyday household rules and expectations to children.

STANDARD 15 – Matching the child with a placement that meets their assessed needs

Underpinning Legislation:

17 – Support, training and information for foster carers

Relevant Legislation:

Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations (2010):

Regulation 9 – Placement plan

Regulation 14 – Termination of placement by the responsible authority

Outcome:

The responsible authority has information and support from the fostering service which it needs to facilitate an appropriate match between the carer and child, capable of meeting the child's needs and consistent with the wishes and feelings of the child, so maximising the likelihood of a stable placement.

15.1) The fostering service only suggests foster carers to local authorities as a potential match for a child if the foster carer can reasonably be expected to meet the child's assessed needs and the impact of the placement on existing household members has been considered. Where gaps are identified, the fostering service should work with the responsible authority to ensure the placement plan sets out any additional training, resource or support required.

15.2) Prior to the placement of each child, the foster carer is provided with all the information held by the fostering service that they need to carry out their role effectively. The information is provided in a clear, comprehensive written form and includes the support that will be available to the foster carer. The fostering service follows up with the responsible authority any gaps in the information provided to them on the child or the child's family, which may hinder the foster carer in providing a safe caring environment that meets the

child's needs and enables them to keep the child, other children in the fostering household and the foster carer him/herself safe.

15.3) Once placed, a child is not removed from a foster carer who is willing and able to continue caring for the child, unless that is in his/her best interests, taking the child's current wishes and feelings into account, and decided (other than in an emergency) through the child's care planning process. If a placement move occurs in an emergency the fostering service informs the responsible authority within one working day.

13. Appendix 5

The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations Vol 2: care planning, placement and case review June 2015.

Permanence is the long term plan for the child's upbringing and provides an underpinning framework for all social work with children and their families from family support through to adoption. The objective of planning for permanence is therefore to ensure that children have a secure, stable and loving family to support them through childhood and beyond and to give them a sense of security, continuity, commitment, identity and belonging. One of the key functions of the care plan is to ensure that each child has a plan for permanence by the time of the second review, as set out in the statutory guidance to the Adoption and Children Act 2002. Achieving permanence for a child will be a key consideration from the day the child becomes looked-after.

The permanence planning process, informed by multi-agency contributions, will identify which permanence option is most likely to meet the needs of the individual child, taking account of his/her wishes and feelings.

A range of options for permanence exist, all of which can deliver good outcomes for individual children:

- For many children, permanence is achieved through a successful return to their birth family, where it has been possible to address the factors in family life which led to the child becoming looked-after.
- For other children routes to permanence outside the care system may include:
 - a) family and friends care, particularly where such care can be supported by a legal order such as a child arrangement order, special guardianship order or in a few cases, adoption;
 - b) adoption, which for many children can offer the best route to a lifelong and legally permanent new family. Twin track or parallel planning, including concurrent planning, Foster To Adopt, may provide a means to securing permanence by adoption at an early stage for some children;

- c) other non-family and friends carers supported by a legal order such as a child arrangement order or special guardianship order.
- For those children who remain looked-after, an important route to permanence is long-term foster care. Where the permanence plan for the child is long-term foster care, this may be where the current short-term placement is assessed to meet the long term needs of the child for permanence or where a new placement is identified for the child as a result of an assessment and matching process.
- Residential care may provide another permanence option for older children/young people who cannot live with birth parents for a variety of reasons nor wish to be in a foster home or to be adopted but prefer to live in a children's home where they can also achieve a sense of security and belonging.

Where it is the case that the most appropriate route to permanence is long term foster care, the following Steps must be followed:

- foster care is the 'plan for permanence' and is recorded in the child's care plan
- the foster carer has agreed to act as the child's foster carer until the child ceases to be looked-after; and
- the responsible authority has confirmed the arrangement with the foster carer(s), the birth parents and the child. This must also include the consent of the birth parents to the plan for permanent foster care.

The assessment and planning process for long term foster care should address the child's current needs and likely future needs, and the capacity of the foster carer to meet these needs now and in the future. The length of placement will vary according to the child's age and the long term plan for the child, including the transition to adulthood. These factors must all be taken into account in planning for support and services where long term foster care has been identified as the plan for permanence for a child.

Before deciding to place a child in a long term foster placement, (whether or not this means moving to a new carer) the responsible authority should assess the ability of the identified long term foster carer to care for the child. The responsible authority will have a process in place to consider the capacity of the carer to meet the needs of the child now and in the future, and to identify the likely support and services that will be needed to ensure that the placement is stable, secure and meets the child's needs. This should take account of the carer's previous fostering or other childcare experience, family configuration (including placement of other children under fostering arrangements), existing relationship (if any) with the child, knowledge and skills and capacity to care for the child long term under a fostering arrangement.

It is imperative that the foster carer fully understands and explicitly agrees to the long term commitment they are making to the child. The responsible

authority should record this discussion and the outcome as part of the assessment process.

The decision to place a child in a long term foster placement with a particular foster carer should be discussed and recorded as part of the review process. This decision should then be recorded in the placement plan and agreed and signed by the foster carer.

Where it is agreed that the child will be placed in a long term foster placement, this should be communicated clearly to the foster carer, the child's parents or any other person who is not a parent but has parental responsibility and the child.

Where the decision has been taken that the plan for permanence is long term foster care and the child is in an existing foster care placement, it may be that the carer and (where appropriate) the child want the existing foster placement to be the long term foster placement. The responsible authority should consider this in a reasonable timescale taking into account the existing relationship between the child and the foster carer, the length of time in placement, the child's relationships with the foster carer's wider family and community. Consideration should also be given to the progress the child has made in the placement, recorded through the case review process.

There may be circumstances where the responsible authority would not consider it appropriate to assess the ability of the current foster carer as the long term carer for the child. In these instances, the responsible authority should clearly set out the reasons for this decision in writing to the foster carer. The responsible authority should also communicate this decision to the child, where it is appropriate to their age and understanding.

It is not desirable for a child cared for under section 20 of the 1989 Children Act to have a plan of permanency through long term fostering. But in this event, consultation with the person/s with parental responsibility must be undertaken before a formal match can be made.