

**EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES  
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

**PERMANENCE AND STABILITY POLICY**

**Policy Aim:**

To help ensure that children grow up as part of a loving family which can meet their needs during childhood and beyond.

**Legislation, Central Government and other External Documents:**

The Children Act 1989 and associated regulations and guidance  
Adoption and Children Act 2002  
Children Act 2004  
National Minimum Standards, Adoption 2011  
Adoption Agencies Regulations 2011  
Adoption Statutory Guidance 2011  
Every Child Matters  
Article 20 - UN Convention on the Rights of the Child  
Human Rights Act 1998

**Slough Borough Council and Education and Children's Services Department**

**References:**

Slough Borough Council - Adoption Agency Policy - April 2011  
Slough Borough Council – Adoption Procedures

**Policy**

Permanence is achieved when a child belongs legally to the family in which they live and is the best way of ensuring that children have secure, stable and loving families to support them through childhood and beyond.

Achieving permanence for a child will be a key consideration while working with children in need and their families outside of the care system and from the day a child became looked after. 'Permanency plans' will be developed and implemented at the earliest appropriate opportunity, and these will be monitored and reviewed at regular Permanency Planning Meetings, with an overview by managers at regular Permanency Tracking Meetings.

The department will make every reasonable effort to enable children to live with their parents, their wider family, or with other members of their connected network, providing this is consistent with the child's current and future welfare.

### *Permanence*

- For most children, the best prospect for a permanent family that meets their emotional, physical and legal needs will be with for them to remain with or return to their own birth parents without the need for a legal order.
- When a child cannot remain with or return home to their birth parents within a time-scale that meets the child's needs, the preferred option, where this is consistent with the child's welfare, is to seek a home for them within their extended family with or without a legal order.
- Where a legal order is required to secure a family, friends or connected person's placement, permanence may be achieved through a Residence Order, Special Guardianship Order or adoption. (Approval of family or friends as foster carers for children subject to care orders is in most cases, short term).
- If permanency cannot be achieved by a return home or a family, friends or connected person's placement then adoption must be considered for all children aged 9 and under. It may also be considered for children over 9 where appropriate and if the child wishes to be adopted.

### *Stability and long term fostering*

- Although long term fostering does not fully meet the criteria for permanence, it can provide stability for some children for whom a return home or placement with relative or connected person is not possible but where adoption may not be appropriate or achievable either because the child is older or because the concept is not culturally acceptable.
- Special Guardianship provides for a greater level of security than a Residence Order, as well as specific support arrangements for those subject to Special Guardianship Orders. Special Guardianship can be an appropriate option for some older children/young people in settled long term foster placements.
- For all children under the age of 14, any proposed long term foster placement will be taken to Foster Panel for 'matching.' It may also be appropriate for children over the age of 14 in certain circumstances.

### *Governing Principles*

When making a decision relating to achieving permanency for the child the following principles must be recognised and adhered to –

- There are unique advantages for children in experiencing family life within their own birth family.
- Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving family which can meet their needs during childhood and beyond.
- The welfare of the child is the paramount consideration.

- Decision-making must be within the child's time scales in order to prevent drift, and children should be kept informed at each stage.
- A child's ethnic origin, cultural background, religion and language will be respected and considered whenever decisions about the child are made.
- Children will receive a detailed, in-depth and holistic assessment in order to identify their individual needs and inform the placement choice.
- Children have the right to participate in discussions about their future, as far as they are able, whilst being made aware that the final responsibility for the decision rests with the adults concerned.
- The wishes and feelings of the child, where appropriate to age and understanding, will be obtained and taken into account. Where they are not acted upon, the reasons for not doing so will be explained to the child and recorded on their file.
- Children have a right to understand what is happening to them and why, to know what is proposed in the care plan, and to understand the implications for them and for their future.
- Delay is damaging to a child's life chances unless the delay is necessary in the best interests of the child. Reasons for such delay should be explained and recorded.
- Children will be informed of their right to make representations and complaints and will be helped to do so if this is required.

#### *Birth Parents*

- Every effort should be made to enable and support the child's own birth parents and extended family to provide a permanent home for the child when it is safe to do so.
- Where a child cannot or should not remain with the birth family Slough Borough Council will continue to work in partnership with birth parents and other relatives to achieve the permanency plan for the child.
- Engaging the birth parents at all stages will be of prime consideration, and referral to the Berkshire Adoption Advisory Service Birth Parent Project, for independent work and counselling should always be considered where the plan for the child is for adoption. Referral to the Adoption and Permanency Team for this service should be made where the plan for the child is long term fostering.

### **CARE PLANNING AND PERMANENCY PLANNING FOR CHILDREN**

- A care plan is legally required for children in public care or children in need. A permanency plan is required from the child's second (four month) Review.
- All looked after children must have one of the following objectives for their overall care plan:
  - assessment
  - restoring the child to his family or community network
  - respite care

- legal permanence
- other long term placements
- This authority will specify within the care plan, who will deliver each aspect of the care plan, as well as setting time scales for completion.
- In order to avoid delay this authority will pursue contingency ('parallel') planning where there is serious doubt about the viability of the child being able to return to his/her birth parents.
- Permanence should be considered at the first and each subsequent review. All looked after children should be tracked to ensure that their plans are pro-actively pursued throughout until the making of the adoption order, or other permanent placement.
- Decisions regarding permanence will be made by the four-month review of a child who is subject to care proceedings and has been continuously looked after. There is an obligation on the Local Authority to ensure that the child's care plan is delivered within the timescales set down for each stage by the National Adoption Standards for England.
- The permanency planning process should:
  - Seek to minimise the length of time that children remain in temporary placements
  - Work to reduce the length of time that a child is exposed to prolonged periods of uncertainty regarding their future
  - Aim to ensure they are provided with continuity and stability of care into adulthood and beyond
  - Promote the positive development of the child's self esteem and identity
  - Facilitate their early discharge from public care, whilst ensuring this is consistent with promoting their future welfare.