

Research suggests: Children and young people who are removed from their family suffer separation and feelings of loss, even if they have been maltreated. These feelings are compounded when they experience multiple placements (Schofield and Beek, 2005). Placement instability reduces a child's opportunities to develop secure attachments. It may also exacerbate any existing behavioural and emotional difficulties (Schofield and Beek, 2005), making it more difficult for children to establish relationships with carers and contributing to further placement breakdown and rejection (Munro and Hardy, 2006).

What is Placement Stability?

When children and young people need to be accommodated they are carefully matched with suitable foster carers. This is done by Access to Resources (A2R) who use a matching tool to check the match between carers and children. A2R will use both the child's referral and profile and the carers profile, pictures, video to explore any viable placements. Any match is not made in isolation both the child's social worker and supervising social worker is involved in the process. It is vital that when a placement is identified both the children and foster carers have the chance to see each other's profiles and have introductory visits, some children may need a transition plan.

Placement planning meetings are an important element of placement stability and provide an opportunity for the child and the team around them to discuss their care plan and to identify any changes or additional support needs.

Any changes to a child's care plan or changes to the fostering family can create anxiety and may have an impact on a child's wellbeing. Any such changes should trigger a support meeting. Support meetings take place to identify issues as they arise or before, if known, in order to support and stabilise placements.

Why is it important?

Children placed in Local Authority care have often experienced neglect, traumatic events and abuse. They need stability and a safe place to live, where they have all their needs met, feel safe, are able to explore and express their feelings and have carers who want to understand them.

If a child does not feel safe, wanted or have a sense of belonging a placement could become unstable, resulting in a possible placement change. Multiple placement moves impact a child's emotional wellbeing and sense of self-worth. This can lead to poor self-esteem, blocked trust and negative behaviour changes. It is therefore vital that the right support is offered to the child and foster carer throughout the child's time in placement.

How do we do it?

Once a child has been matched with a potential foster carer, the carer profile is shared with the child and where appropriate their family.

When the child is placed with a foster carer, the child's social worker will share the placement documents, which detail the child likes, dislikes, routine, and any other information which is important to the child and delegated authority with the carer.

A placement planning meeting is held within 72 hours of the child being placed. At this meeting it is important to share all the information about the child, including their care plan.

Within 2 weeks following the placement start a check in meeting is arranged to ensure all information has been shared and to discuss how things are going. Are there any additional support needs?

If there is any indication via supervision with carers or through direct work with the child that there are worries about the child or the stability of the placement a support meeting should be triggered.

If there is a significant event due, which could affect the child or carers a support meeting should be triggered.



One Minute Guide Placement Stability for Looked After Children



A support meeting can be initiated by any of the team around the child at any point.

Follow up support meetings will be held to review the placement and offer any additional support.