

LANCASHIRE CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

LASTING HOME PANEL PROTOCOL

Purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to set out the key expectations and principles around the function and purpose of the new Lasting Home panel which replaces the Permanence Panel from January 2021 as the process for ratifying a child's home as permanent.

This document is intended as a guide for social workers and managers. It will help define the pathways for inclusion of our children and young people and their carers' in our children's permanence process and make clear the decision-making points and roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders.

Role of Lasting Home Panel

The function of the Lasting Home Panel is to secure children's permanence within their home. The core framework which underpins the function of the Lasting Home Panel is the Permanence Policy.

The purpose of the Lasting Home Panel is to ratify children's homes as their permanent home.

Clear outcomes and financial agreement for a planned celebration event will be given by panel.

The process of ratifying children's homes as permanent is separate to decision making around 'plans *for* permanence' and 'plans *of* permanence'. These processes are detailed separately within the Permanence Policy.

Scope of Panel

Lasting Home Panels will deal with ratification of long-term foster homes, upon appropriate management oversight and matching meeting recommendations.

In some situations, it may be appropriate to consider the long-term match of a connected carer for a child. A core value of Lancashire Permanence Service remains that legal permanence via the most appropriate private court order should be the preferred permanence outcome for our children who are looked after by family members, however we recognise that this is not achievable for some families.

In other situations, it may be appropriate to consider the long-term match of a young person to their residential home. A further core value of Lancashire Permanence Service is that if we cannot support children and young people to stay within their own families, we would seek to care for them in foster homes as a preference to residential accommodation. We do however appreciate that for a very small minority of our children, residential accommodation is the most suitable home. This is particularly the case for our children with complex disabilities.

The permanence ratification of children with connected carers and residential provisions should be considered the exception and not the norm (excluding children with disabilities).

For children who are looked after through short breaks provision, their home with their parents will be their Lasting Home, unless it is assessed to be in their best interests to ratify their short break provision as a Lasting Home for them.

Lasting Home Panels will not deal with permanence planning and should not seek to replace this for children and young people.

NB: See Permanence Policy for details of other processes for permanence planning.

The difference between Permanence Panel and the new Lasting Home Panel

Our children and young people are the focus of their lasting home journey; this must be meaningful to them, supporting inclusion in decision making and promoting participation fully.

We recognise that our children are all individual and unique. As such, their journey to secure permanence will be just as individual and unique. Some of our children will want to participate fully and actively, others will not. We will respect our children's developmental needs, views and wishes, and support them in their journey to securing permanence in the way that is right for them.

Responding to our children

Our children have said that they have not always fully understood what panel is or what it is for, so we have devised a guide to help them understand the process. There is a guide for children and a guide for young people.

Our children have said they did not like the word 'permanence' as this made them feel that they could never return to their parents, if their parents made the changes needed for them to go home. To respond to this, our permanence panel will be known as Lasting Home Panel, which is a name chosen by our children.

Our children have told us that they cannot understand why it takes so long to secure permanence, so we have streamlined the process to make it easier to access and progress. We have emphasised that recommendations for permanence are based on assessed need and matching, not on the length of time already spent living in the home.

Our children have been clear that they do not want a panel made up of strangers, so we have given them the opportunity to identify and bring along with them those who they would like to be part of their Lasting Home Panel. Children have said that they want the

"big bosses" who make the decision as the Panel Chair, and they would like to choose who else attends along with them. This could include teachers, Independent Reviewing Officers, or health professionals. The list is endless and will be determined by our children.

Our children shared with us that they wanted professionals who were important to them to be part of the process, rather than the panel itself, so we have refocused the child's matching meeting to be a forum that is multi-agency and one that will produce paperwork that will make the recommendation to the Lasting Home Panel.

Some children were not sure what happened after panel, so the panel Chair will now send a personalised card to each young person who has attended panel, explaining the outcome.

Our children told us that the celebration event following panel was important to them, so there is more focus on this in the new process.

Membership and Governance

The matching meeting will serve as the multi-agency decision making forum in which joint corporate parenting recommendations to panel will be made, this is chaired by the children's social work Team Manager. Matching meetings need to ensure the inclusion of partners from Health and Education and any other core agency supporting the child, and will seek to replace the previous partnership element of permanence panel. The matching meeting will also ensure the views of birth family are captured.

In the Permanence Service, Lasting Home Panels will be monthly, dates agreed 12 months in advance. There will be one central panel, which will be made up of the three Senior Managers in the Children in Our Care Service. The panel chair will change between Senior Managers to reflect which Division the child is from.

In the Children with Disabilities Service, Lasting Home Panels will be held at a frequency determined by demand (not more than once per month). The Lasting Home Panel will be chaired by the Senior Manager within this service.

Other services within Children's Social Care may also ratify children's homes as Lasting Homes on occasion, for example Duty and Assessment, Complex Safeguarding, or Family Safeguarding. It is anticipated that this will be low numbers of children and young people, therefore the Lasting Home Panels will be arranged on an ad hoc basis, as required, to be chaired by the relevant Senior Manager.

To support participation, Lasting Home Panels will be made up of the people who are important to our children, presenting a different balance of professional and partnership inclusion.

The Head of Service will be provided with all documentation to enable them to provide their approval prior to panel sitting. This will enable oversight from the Head of Service prior to any ratification of children's placements and avoid any delay being experienced.

Our child or young person, their carer, their Allocated Social Worker, and their Independent Reviewing Officer will be invited to attend as standard. Our child can decide if they wish for anyone else to attend.

Foster Carers are expected to attend the Lasting Home Panel and present a 'letter of commitment'. They will be supported to prepare this by their Supervising Social Worker.

Our children and young people should be supported to attend their Lasting Home Panel where appropriate. Where our children do not want to attend, they will participate in their panel via alternative means, such as writing a letter to panel or drawing a picture.

In situations where our children do not attend in person, either their photo, an avatar, or an image which they chose to represent them will be presented during panel.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Children in Our Care Service

Role of Panel Administration

The Lasting Home Panel process is administrated and managed by Business Support. A nominated Panel Administrator is required to act as the custodian of the agenda and booking system, ensure room bookings (virtual and/or physical), and a celebration certificate.

The Panel Administrator will be responsible for ensuring panel dates are set in advance.

The Panel Administrator is responsible for the agenda and will only agree to a young person's booking upon receipt of the matching meeting minutes. The Panel Administrator will need to liaise closely with the Allocated Social Worker for the child to determine time slot for panel (e.g if the child wishes to attend, they will require an after-school time slot).

The Panel Administrator will confirm the agenda one month in advance of Lasting Home Panel and will be responsible for collating and distributing the panel documents to those in attendance.

The Role of the Social Worker

The role of the Allocated Social Worker is to ensure appropriate preparation is completed for panel in a timely way. Matching meeting minutes should be completed prior to the date and time of panel being agreed. This document will serve as the professional submission to panel.

The Allocated Social Worker is expected to support participation of our children, either in person, or via alternative means. To achieve this, the Allocated Social Worker, through direct work, will need to ensure the young person understands the purpose and role of their Lasting Home Panel in supporting their home becoming their lasting home. The Allocated Social Worker will need to spend time carefully preparing the young person for panel. They will need support with considering who they would like to attend their panel, how they want to be part of their panel and what their celebration event should look like.

The Role of Panel Members

Panel members should consider papers submitted in advance of panel from the multi-agency matching meeting.

There is a role for challenge if panel is concerned regarding the corporate parenting partnership recommendation, the level of commitment from carers or stability of the home.

The Chair of the Lasting Home Panel will be responsible for sending a personalised card to all children and young people attending panel celebrating the outcome of decisions.

A record of panel outcomes will be clearly recorded on the child's file by the Senior Manager Chair, using the template guide to ensure consistency across the service.

The Role of Children's Social Work Team Manager

The Team Manager from the Children's Social Work Team will be responsible for chairing and recording the matching meeting, in conjunction with the Allocated Social Worker, Supervising Social Worker and core partners.

The Team Manager is also responsible for updating the permanence tracker following the matching meeting and lasting home panel.

Useful links and information

Lancashire Permanence Policy

https://www.proceduresonline.com/lancashirecsc/files/permanence_policy.pdf?zoom_highlight=permanence+policy#search=%22permanence%20policy%22



partner reporting
prompts for panel.doc