

## THE END OF THE PLACEMENT PLANNED AND UNPLANNED ENDINGS

A placement may come to an end in a variety of ways. Planned endings occur where the plan of the placement has been partly or fully achieved, or it has been decided that the plan cannot be achieved and the plan has to be remade. Placements may end with a child: -

- (a) Returning home to their family
- (b) Moving to another placement
- (c) Returning to their family but with periods of respite care being provided to help maintain the child within their family
- (d) Leaving the placement for independent life
- (e) Having a placement disruption.

The aim of all involved should be for a placement to end in a planned way in line with the care plan.

It is sometimes appropriate for contact between former foster carers and a child to continue for a time through visits, telephone calls etc. In many cases foster carers are in touch years later with young people whom they have cared for in the past.

**Unplanned endings** are upsetting and distressing for all concerned. Unless there is a very serious emergency do try not to ask for a child to be removed with only a few hours notice. The chances are that the child will have to be placed in an emergency situation from where they will have to move again. If you or your children are struggling with a child or young person placement do ask for help. A Placement stability meeting can be called to look at ways in which we can give additional support to a placement, this might involve additional services, planned respite, the involvement of other services. If you really cannot continue, try to give as much notice as possible.

When the whole family is under stress and the placement is going very badly wrong it is difficult to consider how the placement may continue. If however a little time can be found it is sometimes possible to work through the difficulties and continue the placement in a positive way. This may be by the placement continuing or by the placement ending in a planned, more positive way. A number of things can be tried to support a placement these include the offer of respite care, an urgent referral to the CAHMS team, the involvement of a specialist social worker.

If a long term, established placement ends in an unplanned way a **Disruption Meeting** will sometimes be called. These meetings look at the events that lead up to the disruption from everyone's perspective. They also consider your feelings about the support you received, how you have assisted the child and how we can make improvements both for the child's future care and for your family. It might be that you find you were looking after the wrong age range of children or that we asked too much of you in terms of the number and type of children that we asked you to care for. Disruptions rarely happen just because of one reason.

Children will test out foster carers to see if they are still wanted. If the initial difficulties can be overcome a successful placement may be the result. Do share any worries you may have with your fostering social worker or the child's social worker. It is important that you share any worries you have however trivial they may seem at the time. We may be able to find ways to prevent the situation deteriorating to the point where an unplanned ending becomes necessary.

### **When a child leaves**

- Talk to the child about the reasons for the ending. If the reasons are nothing to do with the behaviour of the child, make sure the child knows this.
- Let the child know what contact will be possible in the future with you and your family
- Allow time to say goodbye to your immediate and extended family especially if they have had a good relationship with them
- Pack the life storybook, together with photos and mementos.
- Have you got a passport, birth certificate or disability allowance book? Have you saved any money on behalf of the child? Do you need to hand over the savings book?
- Pack medications
- Help to pack all their belongings in suitcases and holdalls.
- Have the placement pack together with all the child's paperwork ready to give to the social worker.
- If you are happy to speak to a future carer about the child's needs let the social worker know this.