



Supporting the Practice of Reunification Good Practice

Kate Knowles Caritas Care and Sarah Bell Adopt North East

Charity Number 326021 Company Number 1596400

Stats and Figures for North West Concurrent Planning Service

(Caritas Care and Adoption Matters)

187 Concurrent planning placements

21 children have been rehabilitated to their birth family

1 returned to parents as a couple

6 returned to fathers, most not know of at point of referral

5 returned to mum (1 was going to relinquish but changed her mind when parents found out)

1 returned to mum and parent

4 family member – 2 aunt/uncle 2 grandparent

1 extended family member (ex wife of uncle)

3 children who were reunified to parents which was not successful

Preparation of Adopters for Early Permanence and the Possibility of Reunification

- Talk about possibility of reunification from the start of the process
- **Early Permanence Preparation Training**
 - Understanding the legal context
 - Understanding context of parents histories and backgrounds
 - What reunification could look like and process
 - Consider what they may do after a reunification
- **Support groups and Peer Support**
 - Benefit of sharing journey with others who are on a similar journey
- **Friends and family**
 - Supporting their understanding of Early Permanence
- **Messages**
 - Early Permanence puts the children first
 - It hasn't 'gone wrong' if a child returns to their family
- **Qualities in carers**
 - resilience, flexibility, support, have understanding of parents challenges

Information During Care Proceedings

- What messages are we giving through the care proceedings
 - Being mindful of what information is shared, how it is shared and who by
 - Need to provide accurate information
- Keeping carers grounded in the fostering role where possible
 - Not referring to them as mum and dad
- Not giving complete certainty that PO will be granted until it is.
 - As a worker we may want to reassure adopters that adoption is definitely going to be the outcome
 - Things can change quite quickly
 - Unexpected information can change the outcome of care proceedings
- Consistency of Social Workers
 - Messages can change with different social workers

Reunification – The Process

- Start giving carers an awareness that this could be a likely outcome
 - Need to give thought to who should share this and how it is shared
 - Helpful to give them clear information about dates of decisions/court dates/what further work is to be done and when they will actually know what the decision is.
 - Start to process this as a loss
 - If it is a couple may process this differently at different times
- Timing of when information is being shared
 - There needs to be an awareness by professionals about when information is being shared and what the messages are both with the EP carers but also parents given they will be meeting at family time.
- Need to be aware that they will have had lots of information at point of placement about why this child could not be with their family
 - This can therefore be difficult a times if they know the child is returning to a family where there have been a lot of concerns and worries.
 - Can be challenging for EP carers if they have seen that there have been lots of different social workers/inconsistent planning/changes in care planning and information from one social worker to the next.

Planning for the Transition

- Plan carefully and need to involve all professionals
 - Family time workers need to be aware it is an EP placement and that there will be a reunification
 - Adoption Social worker needs to be involved in informing the planning
- Family time increasing where possible prior to the move
 - Supports parents/family members to develop their skills
 - Builds on the attachments for the child
 - Provides evidence whether the parents/family members are able to meet the needs of the child
- Draft plans to be reviewed
 - Shared with EP carers and have their input what they are/are not able to manage – DON'T ASSUME
 - Make sure there is clear detail in the plan. Eg the time – is it the time a child will be leaving or arriving
 - EP carers may feel able to take the child to the family home (if all agree)
 - Plans need to be balanced to ensure they consider all parties but MUST be child centred
 - As a professional have confidence in talking about what the plans should be looking like and having an active involvement

Planning for the Transition

- Transition Plan
 - Needs to be child centred
 - Should not be too long but will depend on the age of the child
 - Need to be aware that both EP carers and birth family will be containing their emotions
 - Needs to include addresses/tel numbers/movement of belongings/who is doing the transporting
 - Include a review point
 - Unannounced visits
 - Good goodbye day
- Actual move day
 - What will this look like
- Plan what the EP carers are going to do afterwards and the actual day
- How they want to communicate with you afterwards
- Need to be mindful that these are people who wanted to adopt this child.
 - We have a duty of care to support them.
 - Sometimes not all professionals quite appreciate the complexity of emotions that the EP carers are experiencing.

Draft Plan

Addresses and tel numbers		
W/C 6 th Feb	Family time at contact centre Family time to be loosely supervised	SW to share plans with mum in terms of planning for her to move in with Nan and transition planning taking place. F to have a bath at contact one day this week thursday EP carers to start writing down Freya's routines/likes/dislikes
9 th Feb - Thursday	EP carer to share info about F routines with mum. SSW to support	Notes see if Nan and Aunt can also be present
Friday 10 th Feb	Family time as normal - Loosely supervised at contact centre	
Mon 13 th	No contact Carers advised of appointment	
Tues 14	10.30 – 12 Family time as normal Loosely supervised	Family time at centre – no change Any feedback from family time worker to SW
Wed 15 th	Final care planning meeting 9.30 Family to provide all food for F once family time is in home CLA review @ 11.30 1.30 – 3pm at home Nans house	Transfer at contact centre Drop off at 12.45 contact centre Worker to transport and supervise family time in home Worker to Transport from Nans house to EP carers
Thursday 16	11 – 2 pm 2 hrs loosely supervised - FT worker 1 hr unsupervised	Carer meet FT worker 10.15 at contact centre Transport SW from nans at end (2pm) EP carer F to come in PJ's so can have a bath. FT worker to feedback to SW
Friday 17	No Family time	

Monday 20	<p>11 – 3 pm unsupervised at nans</p> <p>unannounced visit to take place – SW</p>	SW to transport – Will meet EP carers at++
Tuesday 21	<p>Full day 11- 6pm</p> <p>11- 12 – FT worker stay for first hour loosely supervised</p> <p>Mum to do bed time routine, bath and pjs.</p> <p>Unannounced – Tam 7 Duty</p>	<p>FT worker can met EP carer @ 10.15 and transport to Nans home</p> <p>SSW to transport back</p> <p>Review meeting</p>
Wednesday 22	<p>Full day 11 – 6 pm</p> <p>unannounced visit FT can do as loosely supervised</p>	<p>EP carer to meet FT worker at contact centre @ 10.15</p> <p>SSW to transport @ 6pm</p>
Thursday 23 rd to move	<p>F to move.</p> <p>Time 10 am</p>	<p>SW to move F</p> <p>SSW to support carers if required/requested</p>

To note:

- F has a car seat which needs to go with her on all journeys.
- F's belongings to be moved at each journey to ensure the final day it is just F and a small bag.
- Mum to ensure F is registered with the GP Thursday 23rd February. Mum to provide details of GP practice manager email so that CCP team can share details of her previous GP and the prescription milk.
- SW to contact dietitian re transfer of F to new area.

Other recommendations:

- Discussion would be needed to be had re any role Grandma may have.

What support is being put in place after she has moved.

- Support with weaning and routines – needs to be specific to F due to her intolerance
- Register with GP and transfer dietitian - Social worker will need to inform new GP of carers current GP as this will be confidential
- Feedback to EP carers after F returns Via SSW after 4 weeks

Support After Transition and What Happens Next?

- What has support will look like
 - Discuss with adopters and ask what they would find useful – this may change
 - Awareness that they will be processing a loss and will be going through the stages of loss and grief
 - Offer of therapeutic support/counselling if available
- What has helped
 - Being clear who is doing what and time scales
 - Consideration of options of how they might wish to extend their family
 - This may change through the process
 - Consideration of mainstream adoption and EP
- Letter to adopters from manager or above
 - Acknowledges their loss and the difference they have made to a child's early years
- Follow up for adopters to know how the child is doing.

Experience of EP carers -film

When is the Right Time for Adopters to Consider Another Placement?

- Break needed
 - Timing is different for different people
- Need to have gone through the grieving process
 - Need to be able to talk about the child that they cared for
 - Will have been able to start thinking about other children
 - Need to ensure that if a couple, both are feeling ready to move on
- If people have been prepared well, this process is usually quicker
- If want to consider another EP placement they need to be aware that they could go through the same process again
- Learning from the North West Concurrent Planning Service is that people are resilient and possibly more than we give them credit for
- Consider if the PAR should be updated

Other Things to Consider

- Impact on friends and family – important that they understand what the process is so they can support their loved ones
- Extended Care Proceedings, impact on EP carers
- Impact on workers should be acknowledged
 - Feel responsible
 - Might not have agreed with the decision
 - Impact of supporting the EP adopters through the process can be challenging
 - Might influence how they feel about future EP placements
 - Important workers are supported and wellbeing considered
- Reflective practice exercise
 - Any learning
 - Allows workers the opportunity to share their thoughts and examine these in a structured way

Quotes from Carers

We wasn't part of the planning which made us feel unimportant especially as we had been involved with LAC reviews etc. However having help with the transport helped. We made positive connections with her grandparents and was able to put our personal loss aside to focus on her experience of seeing both them and us together .

Whilst this was an extremely difficult time we found it really helpful to be included in the planning from the beginning and made us feel valued. Seeing where he would be living and spending a short time with his new family has helped us recover in the longer term . The support and sensitivity of the professionals around us was invaluable at a very distressing time and reassured us that he would go on to be loved and well cared for.

Having made a positive connection to grandparents, we felt it was important to show her that we knew their home to be a safe place. By being involved in the Rehabilitation we put our personal feelings of loss aside to focus on her experience of seeing both them and us together for a much longer period of time of the time we had been able to have in contact.

Questions