

FOSTERING PLACEMENTS

A part of the National Foster Care Review, commissioned by the Scottish Government in 2013, the way in which Local Authorities define the different kinds of foster placements has changed. All Local Authorities, Independent and Third Sector Fostering Agencies must use the same placement descriptors, so that communication between all the agencies and professionals who are working as part of the team around the child are better able to communicate about the Child's Plan, consistently and effectively.

Here are the ways in which we define placements:

Permanent: A placement secured by a Permanence Order.

For a child this means that the care planning process has concluded that they will thrive best if they are cared for away from home on a permanent basis. A Permanence Order, which is applied for by the local authority through the courts, can provide the local authority, child and their carer with the legal security, the stability and the time for strong relationship bonds and a sense of belonging to develop.

Long-term: A placement which has been in place for longer than 24 months not secured by a Permanence Order. (This should be an exceptional situation and an indicator that the placement requires close scrutiny) Agencies must differentiate between long-term placements where:

- An Adoption order is being sought
- A Permanence Order with authority to adopt is being sought
- A Permanence Order is being sought
- Child's care plan indicates that the placement will be maintained into adulthood (18+ years of age) without a Permanence Order being sought
- Child's care plan indicates that alternative placements are being sought (including with birth family)
- The child's care plan gives no indication of the placement's objective or expected duration and therefore requires close scrutiny.

Interim: A placement which has been in place for less than 24 months, not secured by a Permanence Order. Agencies must differentiate between interim placements which are:

- Part of a concurrency plan
- Working towards rehabilitation with birth parents or other carers (not part of a concurrency plan)
- Working towards Permanence Order with a different foster carer
- Working towards Adoption Order or Permanence Order with current carer (see definition above).

For a child this means that the care planning process has concluded that they will benefit from spending some time being cared for away from home and there is a time-linked plan for rehabilitation with parents or an alternative care placement is being sought.

Emergency: An unplanned placement made in an emergency, where no other placement type has been identified by the local authority. (Under the Looked After Children Regulations 2009 an emergency placement must be reviewed by a local authority within 3 days, and may be extended for a period not exceeding 12 weeks).

For a child this will mean that there are immediate concerns for their safety and wellbeing and they require to be removed from their home environment as quickly as possible while the care planning process establishes the best option for the child.

Short Break: A placement which forms part of a planned series of short breaks (including emergency placements with a carer who is already providing planned short-break placements to the child or young person).

For a child this will mean that because of special circumstances they and their carer will benefit from therapeutic services or periods of respite.