

## PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Lifelong Learning Committee – 15 August 2012

## PERTH AND KINROSS FRAMEWORK FOR PERMANENCE PLANNING

Report by Executive Director (Education and Children's Services)

**ABSTRACT**

This report outlines the development to date of the Perth and Kinross Framework for Permanence Planning. The Framework also incorporates the Perth and Kinross Council response to both the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) and Scottish Government reports regarding Permanence Planning.

**1 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1.1 Notes the progress to date and ongoing work to address areas of improvement, arising from the Scottish Government's report *Care and Permanence Planning for Looked After Children in Scotland*;
- 1.2 Agrees the Perth and Kinross Framework for Permanence Planning - Action Plan; and
- 1.3 Instructs the Executive Director (Education and Children's Services) to present an update report to Committee in August 2013.

**2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Permanence Planning is the process which ensures the right decisions are made for children who are accommodated, through a full assessment of their needs. This determines where the child should live in the long term. There are four options for children when considering planning for permanence. These are:
  - Rehabilitation home;
  - Kinship Placement;
  - Long term Foster Placement; and
  - Adoption.
- 2.2 In 2007, the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 came into force. This provided a framework for planning for permanence and adoption.
- 2.3 In 2011, the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) published a report on care and permanence planning for looked after children in Scotland. This report identified delays in decision making and obtaining a permanent home, which can mean poorer outcomes for children.
- 2.4 To inform the report and improvement planning, SCRA carried out research into the processes of care and permanency planning for looked after children

in Scotland by following the pathways of 100 children from the point they were first identified as at risk, to the point of adoption or permanence.

2.5 Key findings of this research are as follows :

- For the majority of children, it took over two years from their first involvement with services to when they were adopted or went on to other forms of permanence;
- The shortest time to permanence was 12.5 months, and the longest 10 years and 10 months;
- For most of the children it took more than a year for a decision to be made about moving towards permanence;
- For 35 children it took more than two years; and
- 45% of parents had already had another child(ren) removed from their care. <sup>1</sup>

2.6 The position in Perth and Kinross has been more positive than this, and is currently as follows:

- As at June 2012 the percentage of children accommodated for at least a year in Perth and Kinross, who had a permanence plan, was 96%. This figure reflects the positive decision making for children for whom rehabilitation to their natural family has not been possible. This is supported by a robust assessment process;
- As at July 2012 only one child was awaiting a permanent placement. This child had been linked to a family. One further child was awaiting an adoption placement and work was progressing well.

2.7 In June 2011, the Scottish Government published a report, *Care and Permanence Planning for Looked After Children in Scotland*, <sup>2</sup> responding to the report by SCRA. This report highlights the role and responsibilities of Local Authorities to ensure a holistic approach to the care system. There is specific emphasis on the need to ensure that planning for children who are accommodated begins at the earliest stage possible and that decisions regarding the child's future are made within timescales that meet the child's needs.

2.8 Arising from this report The Scottish Government in conjunction with LACSIG (The Looked After Children Strategic Implementation Group) identified areas for improvement, to consider when undertaking Permanence Planning. Five improvement levers were identified:

- Assessment tools;
- Care Standards;
- Child's Plan;
- Dissemination of good practice; and
- Whole system.

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<sup>1</sup> [Scottish Children's Reporter Administration: Care and Permanence Planning](#)

<sup>2</sup> [www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/06/21093704/1](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/06/21093704/1)

- 2.9 Further actions for improvements were then identified, at both National and Local Authority level, cross referencing the SCRA report recommendations. As part of continuous improvement work undertaken within Children and Families' Services, the Scottish Government report has now been reviewed against current practice and actions identified. The proposals to address improvements are incorporated within the Perth and Kinross Framework for Permanence Planning listed below at item 3.
- 2.10 Further work around the improvements identified is also being taken forward nationally. A copy of the actions identified by the Scottish Government can be found in the link below.

[Care and Permanence Planning for Looked After Children in Scotland: Scottish Government Response](#) .

### **3 PROPOSALS**

- 3.1 The Children and Families Strategy which was approved at Lifelong Learning Committee on 2 November 2011, includes a range of measures focussing on improved assessment and care planning, which will contribute to further improvements in planning for permanency.
- 3.2 Work currently in progress will be taken forward within a Framework for Permanence Planning, ongoing since 2009, based around the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007, which provided the national framework. Local Authorities are able to develop local frameworks to reflect their specific needs.
- 3.3 It is proposed that the Framework for Perth and Kinross is built around the four key headings;
- Assessment Tools;
  - Decision Making and Implementation – Management of the Permanence Process;
  - Decision Making and Implementation – Placements; and
  - Research and Development.
- 3.3 The overview of work to date and further priority actions identified under each heading can be found in Appendix 1.

### **4 CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 The Head of Legal Services and Head of Democratic Services have been consulted during the preparation of this report.

### **5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Actions will be taken forward within the current ECS Revenue Budget.

## **6 COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN OBJECTIVES 2009-2012**

6.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2009-2012 lays out five Objectives which provide clear strategic direction, inform decisions at a corporate and service level and shape resources allocation. They are as follows:

- (i) A Safe, Secure and Welcoming Environment
- (ii) Healthy, Caring Communities
- (iii) A Prosperous, Sustainable and Inclusive Economy
- (iv) Educated, Responsible and Informed Citizens
- (v) Confident, Active and Inclusive Communities

This report relates to Objective No (ii).

6.2 The report also links to the Education & Children's Services Policy Framework in respect of the following key policy area:

- Change and Improvement

## **7 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EqIA)**

7.1 An equality impact assessment needs to be carried out for functions, policies, procedures or strategies in relation to race, gender and disability and other relevant protected characteristics. This supports the Council's legal requirement to comply with the duty to assess and consult on relevant new and existing policies.

7.2 The function, policy, procedure or strategy presented in this report was considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (Eq1A) with the following outcome:

- i) Assessed as **not relevant** for the purposes of Eq1A

## **8 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

8.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a legal requirement under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 that applies to all qualifying plans, programmes and strategies, including policies (PPS).

8.2 The matters presented in this report were considered under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 and no further action is required as it does not qualify as a PPS as defined by the Act and is therefore exempt.

## **9 CONCLUSION**

9.1 The development of a Framework for Permanence Planning, reflecting ongoing improvement opportunities, gives a clear indication of the priority areas of work for Children and Families' Services within Perth and Kinross.

- 9.2 This framework will be used to monitor and feedback progress to ensure children are supported by robust decision making, and evidence to ensure timely decisions are made.
- 9.3 The information gathered to inform progress against the actions, will be both qualitative (monitored by the Fostering and Permanence Panel and Looked After Children reviewing system), and quantitative (linked into the Senior Management Team reporting process and the BMIP).

**JOHN FYFFE**  
**Executive Director (Education and Children's Services)**

**Note:** No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

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Appendices:  
Appendix 1 Framework for Permanence Planning – Action Plan



**FRAMEWORK FOR PERMANENCE PLANNING - ACTION PLAN**  
Appendix 1

**ASSESSMENT TOOLS**

ACTIONS	LEAD OFFICER	TIMESCALE	OUTCOME MEASURES
<p><b>1</b> Looked After Reviews will now occur every 6 weeks until a decision regarding permanence is made. This will ensure that plans are clear, expectations of parents are recorded, and evidence is continually updated. Exception monitoring to be reported to CFSMT.</p>	<p>Reviewing Officers</p>	<p>From July 2012</p>	<p>Decision on Permanence is made &lt; 1 year</p>
<p><b>2</b> Standardise the use of Parenting Agreements which clearly identify the parents' tasks in terms of the impact of their ability to parent. Develop standard template for Parenting Agreements. Ensure all SW teams are consistent in their use of these through audit of use 6 months after implementation.</p>	<p>Improvement Officers</p>	<p>July 2012</p>	<p>Parents understand Social Work involvement and their responsibilities.</p>

ACTIONS	LEAD OFFICER	TIMESCALE	OUTCOME MEASURES
<p><b>3</b> Greater emphasis will continue to be given to parenting capacity assessments by raising awareness across all SW teams of benefits.</p>	<p>Improvement Officers</p>	<p>October 2012 Nov – Dec 2012</p>	<p>Relevant decision making will be informed by Parenting Capacity assessments.</p>
<p>Operational Guidance to be updated</p>	<p>Improvement Officers</p>	<p>Oct 2012</p>	<p>Relevant decision making will be informed by Parenting Capacity assessments.</p>
<p>Training of Social Workers</p>	<p>Improvement Officers</p>	<p>Nov – Dec 2012</p>	<p>Relevant decision making will be informed by Parenting Capacity assessments.</p>
<p>Standardise process for undertaking parenting capacity assessments.</p>	<p>Legal Services</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<p>Relevant decision making will be informed by Parenting Capacity assessments.</p>
<p>Monitoring and compliance to be undertaken by Improvement Officers and Team Leader as required.</p>	<p>Team Leaders/ Improvement Officers</p>	<p>Jan 2013 onwards</p>	<p>Relevant decision making will be informed by Parenting Capacity assessments.</p>

ACTIONS	LEAD OFFICER	TIMESCALE	OUTCOME MEASURES
<p>4 Work will continue with Adult Services to ensure that joint work is focused on outcomes for the child. This is especially important in terms of parents who have substance misuse problems.</p>	<p>Head of Service Service Managers</p>		<p>Shared understanding of parental capacity to meet children's needs.</p>
<p>Development of training programme.</p>	<p>Service Managers/ Improvement Officers</p>	<p>December 2012</p>	<p>Shared understanding of parental capacity to meet children's needs.</p>
<p>Develop shared understanding of procedures to support this work.</p>	<p>Service Manager/ Improvement Officers</p>	<p>January 2013</p>	<p>Shared understanding of parental capacity to meet children's needs.</p>

## MANAGEMENT OF THE PERMANENCE PROCESS

ACTIONS	LEAD OFFICER	TIMESCALE	OUTCOME MEASURES
<p><b>1</b> Review of children awaiting permanence by Improvement Officers/Managers will ensure that there is no drift between decision making at the LAC Review and actions being taken. These cases will be regularly reviewed and monitored by the resource panel (internal scrutiny/decision making group).</p>	<p>Service Managers/ Improvement Officers</p>	<p>July 2012</p>	<p>Prompt decision making. Enables robust timeous assessment of child's needs.</p>
<p><b>2</b> The involvement of the Permanence Team Leader at an early stage of planning will ensure there is no delay in the transfer of children who are moving on to adoption.</p>	<p>Permanence Team Leader</p>	<p>July 2012</p>	<p>Prompt decision making. Enables robust timeous assessment of child's needs.</p>

<p><b>3</b> The current assessment template for children requiring Permanence (Form E) is being reviewed at a national level by BAAF (British Association for Adoption and Fostering) in line with GIRFEC (Getting it Right for Every Child) outcomes. This will ensure a clear focus is placed on each child's future. Review of Form E (Child Assessment) locally informed by national work.</p>	<p>Improvement Officers</p>	<p>Awaiting timescales</p>	<p>Improved Child Assessment.</p>
<p><b>4</b> Ongoing programme of training for staff in the completion of reports will ensure that they are completed in a timely fashion, and are of a high standard.</p>	<p>Improvement Officers</p>	<p>August 2012</p>	<p>Improved Child Assessments</p>

## DECISION MAKING AND IMPLEMENTATION

ACTIONS	LEAD OFFICER	TIMESCALE	OUTCOME MEASURES
<p><b>1</b> Recruitment of Foster Carers who are able and willing to provide long term care for children.</p>	<p>Improvement Officers</p>	<p>September 2012</p>	<p>Carers sufficient to meet need.</p>
<p>Continue recruitment programme.</p>	<p>Improvement Officers</p>	<p>September 2012</p>	<p>Carers sufficient to meet need</p>
<p><b>2</b> Recruitment of Adopters who are able to look after children who may have complex needs.</p>	<p>Improvement Officers</p>	<p>July 2012</p>	<p>Carers sufficient to meet need</p>
<p>Continue recruitment programme.</p>	<p>Improvement Officers</p>	<p>July 2012</p>	<p>Carers sufficient to meet need</p>
<p><b>3</b> The use of the Adoption Register (a National Register that covers UK) for those children who are unable to be matched within our own resources.</p>	<p>Improvement Officers</p>	<p>July 2012</p>	<p>Scottish wide resource to provide appropriate placement to meet child's need.</p>
<p><b>4</b> Confirm that placements for children who remain with their current carers are recognised as permanent; by ensuring appropriate</p>	<p>Improvement Officers</p>	<p>September 2012</p>	<p>Children are secured in placements.</p>

case planning and procedures are in place and recorded.			
Review planning arrangements for providing permanent care for Kinship Carers.	Improvement Officers	September 2012	Children are secured within Kinship Care.

## RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

ACTIONS	LEAD OFFICER	TIMESCALE	OUTCOME MEASURES
<p>1 Social Work Services in Perth and Kinross work closely with CELCIS and will continue to use this link to update local policy and as an opportunity to both share and learn from good practice.</p>	Service Managers Improvement Officers	Ongoing	Identify service improvement opportunities.

