

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Lifelong Learning Committee - 14 August 2013

PERTH AND KINROSS FRAMEWORK FOR PERMANENCE PLANNING UPDATE

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

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report presents the progress to date of the Perth and Kinross Framework for Permanence Planning Action Plan, approved by Lifelong Learning Committee on 15 August 2012 – Report No12/322 refers). The Action Plan was developed as part of the Perth and Kinross Council response to both the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) and Scottish Government reports in 2012 regarding Permanence Planning.

1. BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES

- 1.1 Permanence Planning is the process which ensures robust decision making within appropriate timescales, 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 to home;
 - Kinship Placement;
 - Long term Foster Placement; and
 - Adoption.
- 1.2 In 2009, The Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 came into force. This provided a Framework for Planning for Permanence and Adoption.
- 1.3 In 2012, work led by the national Early Years' Collaborative identified various measures against which progress towards service improvements in Early Years Services can be measured. This included a measure for permanency planning, which is "the proportion of Looked After Children continuously looked after for at least 6 months for whom a permanent decision was made within 6 months." It was agreed locally that this measure would be adopted and used locally in conjunction with a Small Test of Change to improve the permanency planning process.
- 1.4 In 2011, the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) published a report on care and permanence planning for looked after children in Scotland; "Care and Permanence Planning for Looked After Children in Scotland" followed by a Scottish Government Response. These reports identified delays in decision making and obtaining a permanent home, which can mean poorer outcomes for children.

1.5 The position in Perth and Kinross continues to be more positive than the national average, and is currently as follows:

- As at end of March 2013 the percentage of children accommodated for at least a year in Perth and Kinross, who had a permanence plan, was 98% (116 out of 118) up slightly from 2012 (97% - 104 out of 107). This figure reflects the embedding of the robust assessment process and positive decision making for children for whom rehabilitation to their natural family has not been possible. The increase in numbers is reflected nationally in line with the increasing number of children and young people being removed from substance misusing parents;
- Less than five children were awaiting permanent foster placements as at May 2013. These children are currently being linked to prospective placements and it is anticipated that the match for each placement would be confirmed by end of July 2013;
- Less than five children are awaiting adoptive placements. Matches are being pursued through the National Adoption Register (Scotland wide) which, it is proposed, in the Children's Services Bill, will become a statutory requirement. An advert will also be placed in Children Who Wait which is a national publication designed to raise opportunities for children and adopters to be matched from out with their local area; and
- Further actions for improvements were previously identified, at both National and Local Authority level, cross referencing the SCRA report recommendations. The proposals to address improvements within Perth & Kinross Council are incorporated within the Perth and Kinross Framework for Permanence Planning attached which has been updated to reflect the work undertaken in the last year (Appendix 1).

2. PROPOSALS

- 2.1 The progress report on the Children and Families' Strategy, which was presented at Lifelong Learning Committee on 16 January 2013 (Report No13/15 refers), noted the work underway to improve assessment and care planning. These are core tasks to support improvements in planning for permanency.
- 2.2 Work currently in progress is contained within the Framework for Permanence Planning, ongoing since 2009, based around the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007, which provided the national framework.
- 2.3 The overview of work to date and further priority actions identified under each heading can be found in Appendix 1.

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) 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; and
- (ii) Instructs the Executive Director (Education and Children's Services) to continue to monitor this work through Education and Children's Services Senior Management Team.

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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Strategic Implications	Yes / None
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	None
Corporate Plan	Yes
Resource Implications	None
Financial	None
Workforce	None
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	None
Assessments	None
Equality Impact Assessment	None
Strategic Environmental Assessment	None
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	None
Legal and Governance	None
Risk	None
Consultation	None
Internal	Yes
External	None
Communication	None
Communications Plan	None

1. Strategic Implications

Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement

- 1.1 This section should set out how the proposals relate to the achievement of the Perth and Kinross Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement.

Corporate Plan

- 1.2 This section should set out how the proposals relate to the achievement of the Council's Corporate Plan Objectives.

The Perth and Kinross Community Plan 2013-2023 and Perth and Kinross Council Corporate Plan 2013/2018 set out five strategic objectives:

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life;
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;
- (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;
- (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and
- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.

This report relates to Objective No (i).

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

- Inclusion and Equality

2. Resource Implications

Financial

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

3. Assessments

Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.1 This section should reflect that the proposals have been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:

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

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.2 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals.

This section should reflect that the proposals have been considered under the Act and no further action is required as it does not qualify as a PPS as defined by the Act and is therefore exempt.

4. Consultation

Internal

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

5. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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.

7. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Framework for Permanence Planning Update

Perth and Kinross Framework for Permanence Planning Update

	ACTIONS	LEAD OFFICER	TIMESCALE	OUTCOME MEASURES	Updates as at May 2013
1	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	Reviewing Officers	From July 2012 Amend date to April 2013	Decision on Permanence is made < 1 year	Started April 2013 due to long term sickness absence of staff member
2	Exception monitoring of Looked After reviews to be reported to CFSMT (Children & Families Services Senior Management Team)	Reviewing Officers	From July 2012 Amend date to April 2013	Decision on Permanence is made < 1 year	Started April 2013 due to long term sickness absence of staff member
3	Standardise the use of Parenting Agreements which clearly identify the parents' tasks in terms of the impact of their ability to parent	Improvement Officers	July 2012 Completed	Parents understand Social Work involvement and their responsibilities	Audit to measure understanding to be undertaken after first year of use (after July 2013)
4	Develop standard template for Parenting Agreements	Improvement Officers	July 2012 Completed	Parents understand Social Work involvement and their responsibilities	Completed

	ACTIONS	LEAD OFFICER	TIMESCALE	OUTCOME MEASURES	Updates as at May 2013
5	Ensure all Social Work Teams are consistent in their use of Parenting Agreements through audit of use 6 months after implementation	Improvement Officer	July 2012 Completed	Parents understand Social Work involvement and their responsibilities	Completed
6	Greater emphasis will continue to be given to parenting capacity assessments by raising awareness across all Social Work teams of benefits	Improvement Officers	October 2012	Relevant decision making will be informed by Parenting Capacity assessments	Nov – Dec 2012 Completed
7	Operational Guidance to be updated	Improvement Officers	Oct 2012	Relevant decision making will be informed by Parenting Capacity assessments	Completed
8	Training of Social Workers	Improvement Officers	Nov – Dec 2012	Relevant decision making will be informed by Parenting Capacity assessments	Completed
9	Standardise process for undertaking parenting capacity assessments	Legal Services	Dec 2012	Relevant decision making will be informed by Parenting Capacity assessments	Timescales for implementation delayed due to staff absence. Implementation undertaken March 2013. Audit due September 2013

	ACTIONS	LEAD OFFICER	TIMESCALE	OUTCOME MEASURES	Updates as at May 2013
10	Monitoring and compliance of parenting capacity assessments to be undertaken by Improvement Officers and Team Leader as required	Team Leaders/ Improvement Officers	Jan 2013 onwards	Relevant decision making will be informed by Parenting Capacity assessments	Monitoring started. Quarterly reporting to go to Children & Families Services Senior Management Team (CFSMT) from April 2013
11	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	Head of Service Service Managers	Ongoing Review August 2014	Shared understanding of parental capacity to meet children's needs	Monitored through Alcohol & Drug Partnership; Children and Young People Group (ADPCYPG) Mental health protocols and training being developed Children Affected by Parental Substance Misuse (CAPSM) operational group actively involved in this work
12	Development of Training programme in relation to parenting capacity	Service Managers/ Improvement Officers	December 2012	Shared understanding of parental capacity to meet children's needs	One training event undertaken and evaluated. Further work to develop future training underway
13	Develop shared understanding of procedures to support work around Parental Capacity Courses	Service Manager/ Improvement Officers	January 2013 Changed timescale to July 2013	Shared understanding of parental capacity to meet children's needs	Work underway; but timescale not met, due to changes in staff and absence Specific actions to support this work will be identified and the action plan refined in September 2013

	ACTIONS	LEAD OFFICER	TIMESCALE	OUTCOME MEASURES	Updates as at May 2013
14	<p>Review of children awaiting permanence by Improvement Officers/Managers will ensure that there is no drift between decision making at the Looked After Children 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>Resource Panel not used – Improvement Officer responsible for the service monitors and reports drift to Head of Service/Children & Families Senior Management Team</p>
15	<p>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>This process is now reflected in the Operational Guidance. Teams are currently using this. Completed</p>

	ACTIONS	LEAD OFFICER	TIMESCALE	OUTCOME MEASURES	Updates as at May 2013
16	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	Improvement Officers	Awaiting timescales	Improved Child Assessment	Still awaiting national work to be completed
17	Review of Form E (Child Assessment form to determine if a child is in need of permanent substitute care) locally informed by national work	Improvement Officers	Awaiting timescales	Improved Child Assessment	Still awaiting national work to be completed
18	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	Improvement Officers	August 2012	Improved Child Assessments	Small Test of Change(methodology used to measure and evaluate change and improvement) underway to map the journey of a child from decision on permanence through to completion of Form E ((Child Assessment form to determine if a child is in need of

	ACTIONS	LEAD OFFICER	TIMESCALE	OUTCOME MEASURES	Updates as at May 2013
					permanent substitute care)) to identify improvement opportunities
19	Recruitment of Foster Carers who are able and willing to provide long term care for children	Improvement Officers	September 2012	Carers sufficient to meet need as predicted from trend analysis of last 5 years	Ongoing recruitment to meet need underway (May 2013)
20	Continue recruitment of programme	Improvement Officers	September 2012	Carers sufficient to meet need as predicted from trend analysis of last 5 years.	Ongoing - annual review due December 2013
21	Recruitment of Adopters who are able to look after children who may have complex needs	Improvement Officers	July 2012	Carers sufficient to meet need as predicted from trend analysis of last 5 years	Ongoing - annual review due December 2013
22	Continue recruitment programme	Improvement Officers	July 2012	Carers sufficient to meet need as predicted from trend analysis of last 5 years	Ongoing - annual review due December 2013

	ACTIONS	LEAD OFFICER	TIMESCALE	OUTCOME MEASURES	Updates as at May 2013
23	The use of the Adoption Register (a National Register that covers the United Kingdom) for those children who are unable to be matched within our own resources	Improvement Officers	July 2012	Scottish wide resource to provide appropriate placement to meet child's need	Implemented operationally Completed
24	Confirm that placements for children who remain with their current carers are recognised as permanent; by ensuring appropriate case planning and procedures are in place and recorded	Improvement Officers	September 2012	Children are secured in placements	This is now embedded in operational procedures and monitored through Looked After Children Review process (see action 1 under Assessment tools re enhanced role) Completed
25	Review planning arrangements for providing permanent care by Kinship Carers	Improvement Officers	September 2012	Children are secured within Kinship Care	Completed. Ongoing development of Kinship Care panel arrangement reviewed and option to utilise existing Permanence Panel role supported by training identified
26	Social Work Services in Perth and Kinross work closely with, CELCIS (Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland) and will	Service Managers Improvement Officers	Ongoing	Identify service improvement opportunities	Discussion re research with CELSIS underway

	ACTIONS	LEAD OFFICER	TIMESCALE	OUTCOME MEASURES	Updates as at May 2013
	continue to use this link to update local policy and as an opportunity to both share and learn from good practice				