



## **Tried and tested:**

Local changes that are improving children's lives through the Permanence and Care Excellence (PACE) programme



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### Local changes that are improving children's lives through the Permanence and Care Excellence (PACE) programme

We share a vision, alongside colleagues in our sector, that every looked after child in Scotland will ultimately be provided with a settled, secure and permanent place to live, quickly and with minimum disruption to their young lives.

Part of this process is working towards an end to the unacceptably long waiting times experienced by so many looked after children, what is known as 'drift and delay'. We know all too well that such delays in decision-making can be detrimental to a child's development.

In partnership with the Scottish Government, we have developed an innovative and rigorous whole-systems approach to improving permanence for looked after children, using Improvement Methodology and working with all agencies involved in permanence decision-making. This is being delivered through the Permanence and Care Excellence (PACE) programme.



This document provides a snapshot of examples of 'tests of change' that have been successfully introduced in some of our local PACE areas across Scotland. It demonstrates what can be achieved when agencies come together to design and fully test out innovative changes to the way the system currently works, all with the interests of children at its heart.

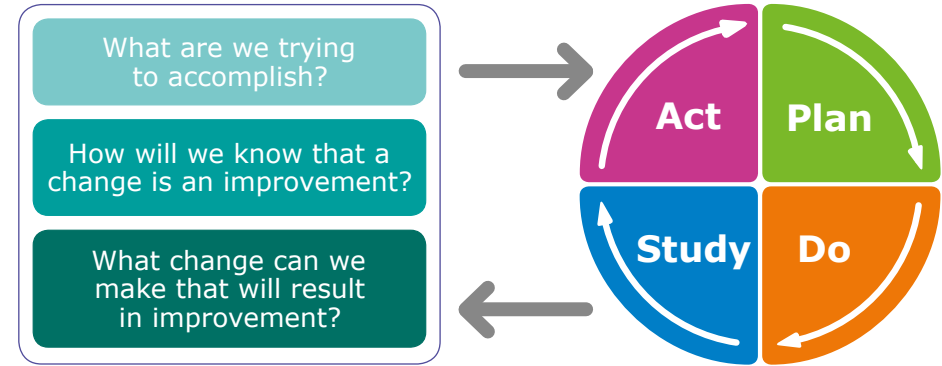
The changes themselves in isolation won't achieve the sustained, fundamental difference to the lives of our looked after children that we all want. However, they are a part of the bigger picture of driving the socially significant outcomes we aspire to.

To find out more details about any aspect of our PACE work please contact [celcis@strath.ac.uk](mailto:celcis@strath.ac.uk) or visit our website [www.celcis.org](http://www.celcis.org).



## Model for improvement

We use the Scottish Government's Improvement Framework to set out what we need to do to support the needs of children.



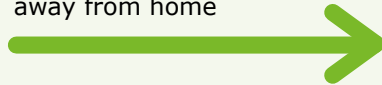
[www.gov.scot/Topics/Government/PublicServiceReform/Improvementframework](http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Government/PublicServiceReform/Improvementframework)



A child becomes looked after at home



A child becomes looked after away from home



Recommendation for reunification home or permanence away from home



Agency decision-maker decision

Legal permanence achieved



Process for children who are unable to go home

This timeline shows the key milestones in decision making for children that have been looked after, including children returning home.

## A child becomes looked after at home

### Agency

Children's Hearing Scotland and Social Work

### Changes for improvement

**Address 'drift' for children subject to a Compulsory Supervision Order (CSO) at home.** Social workers prepare a checklist to be used when preparing for children's hearing. This ensures the key questions are addressed in their report and communicated verbally at the hearing. At the same time, a sub-group of panel members and social workers gathered data on recommendations and decision-making at Children's Hearings over a six month period.

### Rationale

- to ensure in each case when a child is subject to a CSO at home, it is proportionate and the need for compulsion applies

### Impact

- the number of children on CSOs at home has reduced by more than a third, allowing children to remain with their parents or carers, without the need for presentation and review at Children's Hearing

## A child becomes looked after away from home

### Agency

Scottish Children's Reporters Administration (SCRA)

### Changes for improvement

**Early alert to SCRA.** SCRA is given two weeks' notice in advance of children who are likely to become accommodated outside of their family upon birth.

### Rationale

- although SCRA is unable to take referrals for children before they born, this early alert allows them to start considering evidence and preparing Grounds for Referral to be drawn up. It also allows them to hold an Initial Children's Hearing within two weeks of birth
- it is hoped that this will reduce delays in establishing grounds for referral, should reunification with birth families be unsuccessful
- it is also hoped to reduce the need for emergency measures (Child Protection Orders) being taken, therefore reducing potential stress for families

### Impact

- contributed to improving early initial Children's Hearings being held for new born babies who were unable to return home to their parents at birth, and therefore improving the life chances of the child

# A child becomes looked after away from home

<b>Agency</b>
Social Work, Health and Education
<b>Changes for improvement</b>
<b>Standing agenda which anticipates future issues.</b> Child's 72-hour post-admissions meeting has a set agenda which includes roles and responsibilities for all agencies (e.g. health, education, social work) involved with the child and family over the next two week period.
<b>Rationale</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>at every 72-hour review, all agencies should be clear about the information they need to provide about the child to support planning</li></ul>
<b>Impact</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>contributed to improved decision-making for a child to return home or remain accommodated by 40 weeks, therefore encouraging a more stable environment for the child at as early a stage as possible</li></ul>

<b>Agency</b>
Social Work, Health and Education
<b>Changes for improvement</b>
<b>Looked After Review at two weeks.</b> Two weeks after a child is accommodated, a review takes place, chaired by an independent reviewing officer. Dates for all future Looked After Reviews are set at this meeting including the Permanence Decision-Making Looked After Review, within the agreed timescale.
<b>Rationale</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>an Independent Reviewing officer who is consistent for the child throughout their journey takes ownership and exercises leadership in driving the child's plan</li><li>this includes having an overview of completion of assessment, and meeting timescales for decision-making, scheduled from the two week review</li></ul>
<b>Impact</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>contributed to improved decision-making for a child to return home or remain accommodated by 40 weeks, therefore encouraging a more stable environment for the child at as early a stage as possible</li></ul>

# A child becomes looked after away from home

<b>Agency</b>
Social Work
<b>Changes for improvement</b>
<b>Introduce a well-being baby tool.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>to maintain a focus on the infant's needs during pre-birth work with parents in cases where there are concerns about their capacity to parent</li><li>to both support the parents understanding and prioritise the needs of the infant</li></ul>
<b>Rationale</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>to give the infant a voice by changing the language used with parents. Supporting them to understand what their young child needs from them and why</li><li>to emphasise parental responsibilities as well as rights</li><li>to be used at pre-birth Child Protection Case Conference</li></ul>
<b>Impact</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>social workers report this helped improve facilitate a conversation with parents and kept the child at the centre of the discussion and decision-making</li><li>the infants involved remain with their families</li></ul>

<b>Agency</b>
Social Work and panel members
<b>Changes for improvement</b>
Holding and maintaining a chronology of life events for a child is a vital component in our understanding and analysis of a child's experience. A test of change undertaken has been to use a visual timeline to support the chronology for a child, and to ensure that it is presented at relevant meetings to inform decision-making.
<b>Rationale</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>the timelines have been used with parents, with a child or young person, with carers, extended family, with decision-makers, within supervision, with panel members and at permanence (fostering and adoption) panels</li><li>gaps in the timeline provide a crucial visual representation of how much time has passed between each event and can often tell us much more about the child's experience than the chronology alone</li></ul>
<b>Impact</b>
The timelines have helped to keep the child and their lived experience at the centre of decision-making by telling the child's story on one sheet of paper. It has enabled the whole decision-making system of parents, carers, social workers, panel members and courts to visually 'see', consider and understand the child's journey to date and the implications of their age and stage of development. It has had an emotional impact on those reading it, and has created a sense of urgency in securing a safe and settled place for the child to live.

# A child becomes looked after away from home

<b>Agency</b>
Legal services and Social Work
<b>Changes for improvement</b>
<b>Early legal advice for Permanence Looked After Review.</b> Eight weeks in advance of the Permanence Looked After Review, social work ask for legal services to diarise the provision of written legal advice four weeks before the review.
<b>Rationale</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• for those children who are accommodated, evidence suggests that they are unlikely to return home</li><li>• to avoid delay, legal advice can be sought in advance of the Permanence Looked After Review</li><li>• if parents in the meantime are supported and able to address their parenting capacity issues sufficiently, this advice can be withdrawn</li></ul>
<b>Impact</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• contributed to reducing delay caused by waiting for legal advice after a permanence decision, by eight weeks caused by waiting for legal advice after a permanence decision away from home has been made at a looked after review</li></ul>

<b>Agency</b>
Health and Social Work
<b>Changes for improvement</b>
<b>Improve provision of medical assessments on time.</b> Permanence social worker (some local authorities have a dedicated Permanence Team who work with children once a decision away from home has been taken) takes Health Assessment Checklist to the Permanence Planning Meeting, as well as a Panel Paper Checklist. Checklists are also sent to locality managers for distribution at Permanence Planning Meeting.
<b>Rationale</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ensure partner agency information (e.g. health/education) is received as swiftly as possible</li></ul>
<b>Impact</b>
This has led to better communication between agencies and greater clarity on the next steps that need to be taken by all agencies to progress permanence plans for looked after children.

## A child becomes looked after away from home

### Agency

Social Work

### Changes for improvement

**Permanence plan for all looked after children.** Through a process of review over a period of nine months, a permanence plan was recorded for each looked after child. For some children there would be no further planned move and although a permanence decision had been made for each child, it had not been formally recorded.

### Rationale

The language of 'permanence' has changed and should be incorporated into the looked after review process. Although plans may change, at any point in time, all looked after children should have a permanence plan.

### Impact

All looked after children in this local authority now have a permanence plan in place.

## Recommendation for reunification home or permanence away from home

### Agency

Social Work

### Changes for improvement

**Cease use of Form E part 2.** The assessment report that goes to the Permanence Looked After Review is amended to contain all the information about the child which would be required by the Permanence Panel.

### Rationale

Social work staff described the repetition that occurred in producing a Form E after completing a comprehensive assessment for consideration at the Permanence Looked After Review. This additional documentation was burdensome and did not add significantly to the information for the child, which causing significant delay while awaiting its completion.

### Impact

- contributed to the reduction of three months in the time it was taking for a decision to be ratified by the agency decision-maker when deciding to place a child permanently away from home



# Recommendation for reunification home or permanence away from home

<b>Agency</b>
Social Work
<b>Changes for improvement</b>
<b>Mentoring support.</b> Two weeks after the Permanence Review that has recommended permanence away from home, a social work mentor meets with the child's social worker to confirm tasks, roles and responsibilities that need to be fulfilled. This enables the presentation of the recommended child's plan to the Permanence Panel within the agreed timescale.
<b>Rationale</b>
Mentoring and coaching supports workers to ensure they are clear about tasks, and feel supported to drive through plans within timescales that are in the best interests of the child.
<b>Impact</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contributed to the reduction of three months on the time it was taking for a decision to be ratified by the agency decision-maker when a child is placed permanently away from home</li> </ul>

<b>Agency</b>
Scottish Children's Reporters Administration
<b>Changes for improvement</b>
<b>Recorded delivery of notification for advice hearings.</b> Advice hearings are notified by recorded delivery, and social workers make contact with the family two days before the hearing. In the event of a continuation, the reporter undertakes to reschedule the advice meeting within two weeks.
<b>Rationale</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to avoid panel members continuing advice hearings when relevant people don't attend</li> <li>delay is avoided by special attention to getting the right people to attend, and when this isn't possible providing evidence that notification was received</li> </ul>
<b>Impact</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contributed to SCRA reporting that there was a significant reduction in advice hearings being continued</li> </ul>

# Legal permanence achieved

<b>Agency</b>
Legal Services
<b>Changes for improvement</b>
<b>Same timescales for Permanence Orders as for Permanence Orders with Authority.</b> Apply the same timescales to decision-making and lodging at court for Permanence Order (PO) as for Permanence Orders with Authority (POA).
<b>Rationale</b>
A legal decision for a PO is as important to the child as an application for POA.
<b>Impact</b>
Improved focus on the importance of legal security for all children. The change has anecdotally been reported to drive more timely applications for PO and for them to be treated with the same priority as POA's.

<b>Agency</b>
Judiciary and Social Work
<b>Changes for improvement</b>
<b>Communicate what works between the court and practitioners.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• round table meeting with Sheriff Principal, Sheriff and Social Work to discuss barriers to decision-making and the most useful way that information is submitted to the court</li><li>• quantity of productions reduced, memorandum of understanding agreed with legal services and family solicitors in advance of presentation at court, and clerks to the court prioritise court time for children's hearing and local authority applications</li></ul>
<b>Rationale</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• lengthy court proceedings for children can add to 'drift and delay' in decision-making and insecurity for children</li><li>• some matters can be agreed in advance of hearings to reduce the need for evidence being led</li><li>• concurrent court time for leading evidence enables matters to be resolved in a shorter timescale</li></ul>
<b>Impact</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• two thirds of applications to court were dealt with by 20 weeks or sooner</li><li>• solicitors report an improved relationship between legal services and the court</li></ul>



CEL CIS, based at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, is committed to making positive and lasting improvements in the wellbeing of Scotland's children living in and on the edges of care. Ours is a truly collaborative agenda; we work alongside partners, professionals and systems with responsibility for nurturing our vulnerable children and families. Together we work to understand the issues, build on existing strengths, introduce best possible practice and develop solutions. What's more, to achieve effective, enduring and positive change across the board, we take an innovative, evidence-based improvement approach.

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