

Date: August 2020

Title: Children who are looked after at home

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You are watching a webinar about the PACE programme, from the delivery team in CELCIS, at the University of Strathclyde. PACE is a Quality Improvement programme with the aim of reducing drift and delay in permanence planning for looked after children. These webinars were recorded in the spring of 2020 so please be aware that key changes in legislation, guidance and practice may have occurred since this time. This webinar was recorded live as part of the PACE Collaborative programme.

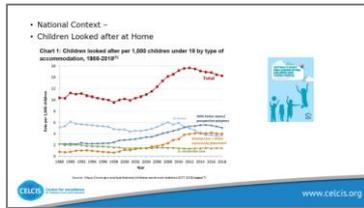
In this webinar you will hear about looked after children at home as part of Aim 2. The session is delivered by Craig Morris, a consultant in the PACE programme, and Keith Dyer of City of Edinburgh Council.



(CM) What we've got, if we think about it, for children that are looked after at home, in terms of what came along in 2015 is another policy strategy and directive that I know has been put on everybody's desk, but how do we get it right for children that are looked after?

And if we break that down further, what it quite clearly says is that - children on compulsory supervision orders at home, shouldn't be in that situation for longer than two years. We should be looking at early engagement, early planning, early intervention.

We have a very sound policy and strategic landscape for how we look after children in Scotland, particularly for children that are looked after at home. So the basis in the landscape is there and the structure that we need; so what about the actual numbers?



In terms of the context for children, looked after at home, if we actually look at it from our rate per 100,000 children and take it from the [CLAS statistics](#) that are produced every year; the number of children looked after at home has reduced year on year since around 2010. It's now been overtaken by kinship care and foster care. So my question to everybody is: is this by default or by design? I suppose that's the first question that I'm actually putting out there. We're now saying there's a change in trend and reduced numbers of children looked after at home, however we still have a few thousand children that are on compulsory supervision orders at home.

The numbers are there and we can see quite clearly what the numbers are for looked after children in Scotland. Keith will talk a little bit about the numbers in Edinburgh, more specifically about what each dot in the run chart means for children. But this is a rate, per one thousand children, who are looked after in Scotland and the changing picture is that the numbers are reducing. We can see that from the national perspective, so again I go back to why should we focus on children who are looked after at home?

Education

Early Years and Primary

Table 11: Percentage of children in care groups 1 and 2 achieving Level 1 or above in the Early Years and Primary Education Attainment Test (EYAT) by care group, 2014-15

Secondary

Table 12: Highest level of attainment of children looked after by care group in the Secondary Education Attainment Test (SEAT) by care group, 2014-15

Source: Children's Reporter Agency, 2015

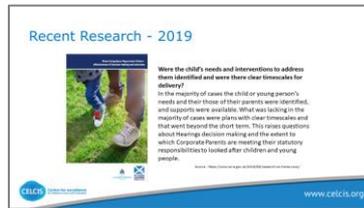
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And again, I'll take you back to some numbers - and I make no apologies for this - because without data there's no story and without stories there's no data.

So if I take us to the very, very early stages of early intervention, early years and early planning, we can break down the numbers of children and each of the care groups and look at how likely they are to actually achieve the things they need to achieve in terms of their education. If we look at the left hand side for early years and primary, we are already starting to see that children that are looked after at home, are off to a slower start than other care groups.

If we look at children that are looked after at home and we look at reading, and we consider that as a number of 44 compared to the next group - which is kinship friends and relatives - the numbers start to increase. What we're seeing very early on in a child's life, is those looked after at home are less likely to achieve. Now if we actually then take it forward in a child's journey, what we're seeing is that 25% of children that are looked after at home have

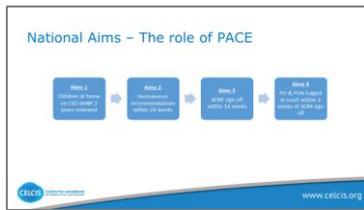
no passes at SQFC level 3 or better. And if we compare this with children in kinship or foster care, what we can quite clearly see is that children looked after at home have less opportunity to achieve in education. So this is another reason to focus on children who are looked after at home.



Quite a pertinent piece of [research](#) came out last week which was commissioned by the Scottish Government and links to this webinar - what it looked at was home compulsory supervision orders. It's quite a significant piece of research that I would encourage everybody to look at; it's probably been shared through the PACE Collaborative networks [linked at the end of the document]. If you've not seen it we'll share the slides and the sources there and I'd encourage everybody to read it.

There are about eight or nine different sections around the briefings that are there and what I really wanted to do was ask the question, do the compulsory supervision orders at home work beyond two years? If I take you to page 12 of report two; after two years, (and again I don't want to be reading slides here), but after two years the average number of concern indicators was still as high as those who were on compulsory supervision orders that were terminated after one year. I think in some respects it's quite clear what this is telling us; they work in the short-term and they're not something to use in the long-term.

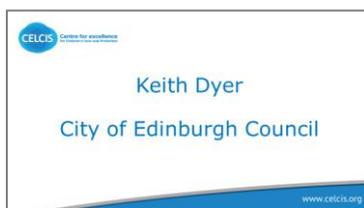
That what I'd also say we know from frontline practice - there's a lot of complexities about each and every single one - but what this research quite clearly says, is that after two years the average number of concerns for wellbeing indicators was still the same as those that were terminated after a year. The other thing I'd like to draw your attention to is - what Keith is going cover in his presentation - around 40% of the young people on a CSO at home for over two years had no clear plans in place. So if we're looking at timescales, we're looking at short-term timescales, to ensure children have a clear plan of support in place to help them move forward in their journey.



Okay, so what's the role of PACE? Again this will be something that through your coaching sessions, we'll be coming back to. The role of PACE is quite clearly looking at four national aims. I've condensed these a little bit, (just taken out the key words), but if we really look at Aims 1 - 4, what we're looking at and what we're asking for is that every child on a compulsory supervision order at home is reviewed every two years.

One of the things we found in the PACE programme is the inequity of the care groups; you know I call it my love of football, from the premier league standard to the highland league standard and if you are looked after and accommodated there's a comprehensive independent reviewing process. But what we found, which is significant, is that across Scotland if you're looked after at home on a compulsory supervision order, there is no independent review or in some instances no reviewing process in place. That's something we've highlighted and most of the areas we work with, once they have undertaken a two year review, are very likely to recommend the order is terminated, varied or the child in some way takes a different journey.

Three of the PACE areas are currently focused on Aim 1, by reviewing all children looked after at home who have been subject to a CSO for two years or more. I'll also ask the question (again, open up for some debate here), how can we achieve the same standards for children that are looked after at home as those children that are accommodated? How can we achieve the same standards across Scotland, to ensure equality of the care provided? We know that outcomes for looked after children per se are poorer than their counterparts, although they are improving year on year.



What I'd like to do now is to introduce Keith. Myself and Keith have been working together over the last 18 months and I have nothing but the utmost respect for this gentleman in terms of his passion and the way that Edinburgh explored the looked after agenda. It's been really thorough and I would describe it as no stone left unturned. Across the four aims, very honest discussions happening here in Edinburgh and with no further ado it's with absolute pleasure that I hand over to Keith.

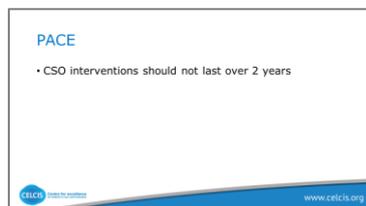
(KD) Good afternoon folks, I'm Keith Dyer. I'm the Quality Assurance and Compliance manager here for the City of Edinburgh Council. I work underneath the chief social work officer as their Quality Assurance and Compliance manager, overseeing all things to do with social work delivery from children to adults.

In terms of PACE, it's 18 months old in Edinburgh, as Craig alluded to, and we've got four aims. The first one is the one that we'll be discussing today and apparently across Scotland it's called Aim 1 which is our compulsory supervision orders at home.



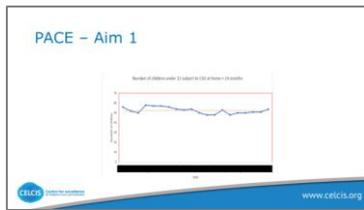
We've currently got 329 children in Edinburgh who are on CSOs at home and that's just a smidge over quarter of all our children on legal orders. The rest of this presentation (a couple of slides and me talking to you about them), is connected to those on CSOs for over two years.

So we've got 54 children currently, which is about 16% of those on CSOs. So, a relatively clear cohort of children.

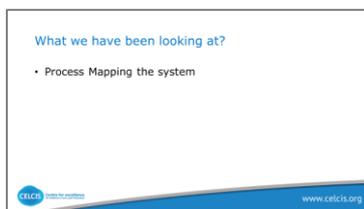


When PACE first came in, I can still remember the audible gasp, when Craig spoke of the two year period for CSOs, and although Craig alluded to earlier on in his presentation that this would have been a 'well kent' fact by us all, it wasn't; because in Edinburgh CSOs lasting over two years and in fact in multiples of twos - to four years, and on occasion hitting six years, were far from unheard of.

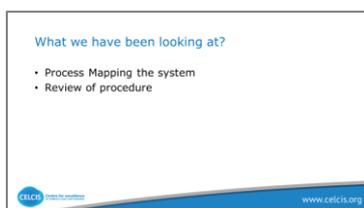
So the idea started from a very low threshold, I suppose; in terms of knowing we had CSOs quite clearly over that timeframe. So some of the work that we started on Aim 1 was really to unpick just what that was.



Now this is an updated run chart, the median when we first started to do this was 58; it is currently at 54. So as you can see, the variation doesn't jump about too much, and in fact apart from that blip around February 2019, we have been fairly well under the median until very recently and a lot of that we're putting down to - I would love to take the credit for the work that we've been doing in PACE - but a lot of it's the Hawthorne effect. That we're actually, because of that audible gasp in the room when Craig said 'guys, it's really got a shelf life of two years', that actually the more you focused on that, the more things started to change.

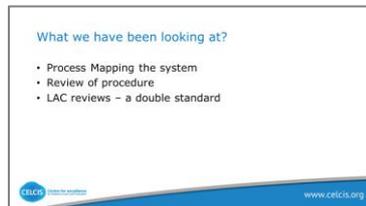


So in terms of its early days, the other activities that we've done - in not just looking at that rolling figure of children over two years, was starting at the start: what is our system? And part of that was process mapping the system. That was myself and a group of social workers in the southwest of Edinburgh sitting down and saying 'right, so you've got a requirement by the Reporter for a report before you even get into the CSO, what does it look like?' And this is a theme that we'll come back to. I made the suggestion to the group of staff that, as part of that referral, [GIRFEC](#) must be there, and they laughed actually. We know we get we get a lot of initial referrals about certain concerns that would require IERs or SBRs to be completed, that just make no reference to GIRFEC at all, and as I say that was a significant bit of the mapping that we'll come back to.

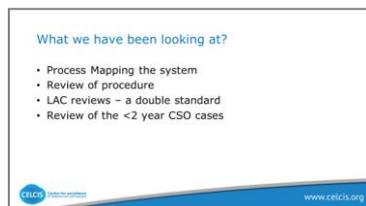


We also reviewed our procedure and really, not that Craig has stolen the thunder, but I think he's captured quite clearly this equity in process. Crudely put, our looked after and accommodated at home procedure runs quite short of 18 pages and the looked after at home procedure is eight pages and actually starts on page one of the child being on a compulsory supervision

order at home. It's quite a dated document because although we're sitting here in 2019, it currently makes no reference to [GIRFEC](#) either. So we already knew that we'd got quite a bit of our process that was out of date and procedures hadn't kept up with the way that social work, and intervening with family life, had moved on.

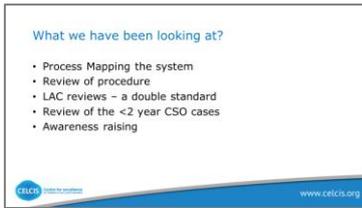


LAC reviews, the double standard – “the Highland league, the premier league” - that Craig spoke of; that was very much is part of our discussions, and it came out loud and strong. We have a reviewing team for both child protection and looked after and accommodated children in Edinburgh. If you're a looked after child at home, however (one of those 329 that we saw in the Edinburgh numbers), your care plan is reviewed by your allocated social worker. So, we immediately started to look at that and that's something that we'll come back to.

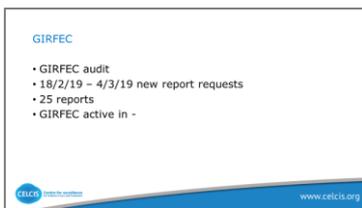


We also did a root and branch desktop review of those children who's CSOs had lasted for more than two years. I won't lie, I suspect that we thought a significant number would be affected by drift and that we would find some very early quick wins and be able to say 'look these cases are drifting'. It couldn't be further from the truth in all honesty. What happened was, I think there was about 64 cases in all that were reviewed. Edinburgh is cut up into four quarters and from that desktop review, the headline figures were, these were complex chronic cases that were more often than not affected by underlying domestic abuse, and more often than not there was some element of parental supervision that was tied in and almost inextricably, we could not get the cases out of the system as a result of that bind.

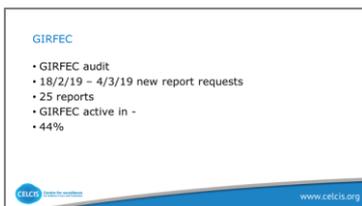
So with complex or chronic mental health and domestic abuse, things were not going to disappear easily or very quickly and ultimately it made us stop in our tracks because, as I say, we started off on that journey thinking that we would find drift and actually what people came back and said, was that there was a good reason for these orders to be in place.



And part of that was, I was focusing on awareness raising. Part of this was considering in Edinburgh 'is that an Edinburgh thing or a PACE thing?' Almost a suggestion that PACE was somehow trying to set the agenda, although the more conversation you had with people, the more the understanding and the awareness of: if you're going to affect and intervene in somebody's life for two years, or more than two years, when do you become part of the problem and no longer a part of the solution? And that was part of the challenge for us; raising the awareness of these interventions – if they come at the right time and off the back of exhaustive attempts to work in a voluntary capacity anyway - surely it makes a lot of sense that we should be intervening for less than two years, ideally.



So in terms of this, we looked at [GIRFEC](#) first of all and went back to process mapping (and as I say, I don't think it was for the humour in it) but the group of staff laughed when I suggested that GIRFEC surely was the starting point, before we even went for a CSO... And I suppose it's also important to say here, because of that root and branch review of cases, we altered where we were reviewing. We decided that actually there was very little the PACE or Quality Improvement methodologies or techniques or systems change, could offer to that cohort. But what we could do is go further upstream and stop children coming into the system, or when they were coming into the system, making sure that that system was dealing with their families or their personal issues within that two year window and not having that intervention drag on.

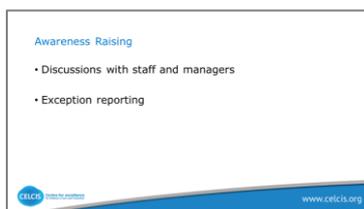


So [GIRFEC](#) seemed to be a very natural place to start, so earlier on in this year, February to March, we looked at 24 reports that came in across the city, - so they were reports requested by the Reporter - for children, with the view of whether compulsory measures were required or not. GIRFEC

planning was active in only 44% of those 25 reports, so perhaps not the biggest sample in the world, but significantly less than half. So GIRFEC, Scotland wide, as Craig said, has been active since 2012 – it's well established in Edinburgh – yet only 44% of those cases that the reporter had on their books asking the local authority for statutory reports; was GIRFEC in place.



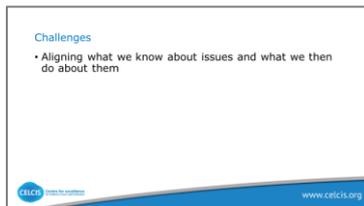
In looking at the map, hopefully that stands out and doesn't set the heather alight too much as a new idea. You have universal services, then above universal if there's a child or a family who's struggling with child care issues, GIRFEC kicks in. That's the whole purpose of GIRFEC; that safety net and you have to, in my understanding, go through that safety net before you jump into statutory work. Perhaps not universally, but more often than not, that should be the case. So from that position, there was work to do within Edinburgh; awareness raising was happening with SCRA, to make sure that they were aware and also with PACE, with Craig and CELCIS.



So awareness raising has been probably our strongest suit to date. That this is really about asking those challenging questions of one another, of 'well why should we limit it to two years?', then flip that onto its head to 'why would we not limit it to two years?' If we had some challenge or some long lifetime issue in our childhood that lasted longer than two years - that's detrimental and has a huge impact. And one of the lower hanging pieces of fruit - I say with a slight wry smile on my face, because I'm going to discuss exception reporting. Not that long ago and certainly within my career, we had a similar issue with children on the child protection register, at significant risk of harm, being on the register for longer than two years. One of the quick fixes we had then was to start exception reporting; now I'm nothing if not original, so I thought one solution would be exception reporting of the live issues. I'll tell you a wee bit about how we got on with exception reporting later on.



'Family group decision making' is what we call it in Edinburgh. Family group decision making is really about getting family members together to talk about family issues, family problems and come up with a family plan that directly addresses the identified issues and problems. We have a well-established service, well over a decade in place now, although what we haven't had, and we've tried to do here, is that when a CSO, (a child on a compulsory supervision order), has been on an order for 12 months, that's a new trigger, a new referral. What we're trying to do is, perhaps not for that two year cohort, but the current cohort that are around about the year point, is start holding family meetings. We could remove some of the inertia, some of the initial 'we've got to get this started, oh well actually we're 12 months in' and it's very early days, but the early signs are that, actually, (and we've had three of them) two children have gone back to hearings to have their CSOs terminated. So there's probably far more that we could be doing from that angle.



As I said, I would revisit exception reporting. If you recall, this was my quick win. Well it's taken well over a year and I still haven't got exception reporting up and running. I suppose this is one of the pitfalls and perils of any Quality Improvement that requires you to change a bit of IT system; in the 'back office' the changes just haven't happened at pace. They've been replaced by other pressing IT demands - which just means that we haven't got that up and running. However, I don't think that's affected the awareness raising too much.

One of our biggest challenges has been aligning the 'right, what have we found out through PACE about our system?' Well, what about those reviews, what about the fact that we've got an in-house reviewing team (well-staffed)? What I haven't alluded to in this presentation is that in Edinburgh we've got some of the lowest numbers in the last decade of children on the child protection register. Also within the last decade we've got our lowest number of looked after and accommodated children.

So the talk therefore turns to capacity and if not now when will that in-house team be able to pick up our children on home supervision? Given what we do know about their outcomes - and Craig's gone through some of some of that but it's well-rehearsed and it's well known - it's that challenge that I've put on the title of that slide: what else do we need to find out about a problem before our system starts to respond, before we actually address it?

So I would love to tell you folks that we've cracked it in Edinburgh and I've got agreement, and what I've got is agreement on the problem, but I've yet to get that silver bullet, that panacea to say 'yes, we will start reviewing the CSOs at home', and those are probably some of the main challenges.

We've obviously got a procedure to update that's outdated as it doesn't acknowledge [GIRFEC](#) and the fact that, before you even start saying that you've exhausted all non-compulsory measures, you have to have also exhausted GIRFEC. I think that's probably one of the biggest findings that we've had in Edinburgh. And again the challenge is, this is an issue with our system and what are you going to do about it? And that's the system that's partially - only partly - owned by the local authority. And obviously significant responsibility for that lies with SCRA and what they actually ask for in terms of it.

So it's been a mixed picture through the 18 months. We understand a lot more about how Edinburgh operates with CSOs at home. We've acknowledged we're not going to change a great deal for the existing cohort. However, there is a lot more that could be done in terms of the system that could support those either entering it or have just entered into it going forward. Thank you.

(CM) A massive thank you from myself to Keith for putting this presentation together, but more so I thank you for the work that you've done in Edinburgh over the last 18 months; they've really applied what I would call real candour and transparency and left no stone unturned. We could probably dedicate a presentation for the work that's been done on Aim 4, and still to be done on Aim 4, but I think we've focused one thing here. I would also draw your attention to - and I know that Keith's heart will start beating a bit faster when I say this - the inspection that took place between January and March that in Edinburgh there has been a reduction year on year in looked after children per se, and we're at the lowest numbers we've seen since 2009.

So again that's credit to the work that's been done, in the social work offices that might not be seen on the picture postcards - or going back to the filming that Vin Diesel will see in the next few weeks while he's in Edinburgh! Credit to the work that's been done in local social work offices and again thanks to Keith and thanks for the candour and honesty today.

Linked resources

CELCIS Knowledge Bank:

<https://www.celcis.org/knowledge-bank/>

Independent Care Review and The Promise:

<https://www.carereview.scot/>

Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services:

<https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/independent-report/2011/06/commission-future-delivery-public-services/documents/0118638-pdf/0118638-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/0118638.pdf>

Children's Social Work Statistics:

<https://www.gov.scot/collections/childrens-social-work/>

Getting it Right for Every Child:

<https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/>

Getting it Right for Looked After Children and Young People:

<https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2015/11/getting-right-looked-children-young-people-strategy/documents/00489805-pdf/00489805-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/00489805.pdf>

Scottish Children's Reporter Administration research:

<https://www.scra.gov.uk/2019/09/research-on-home-csos/>