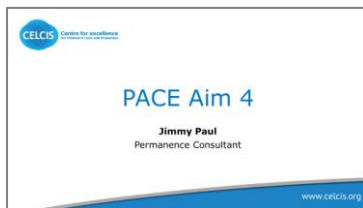


DATE: August 2020

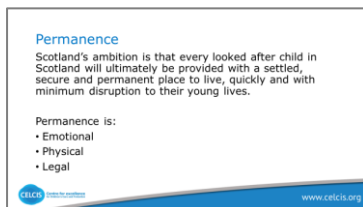
TITLE: PACE Aim 4

SPEAKER: Jimmy Paul, Permanence Consultant, CELCIS

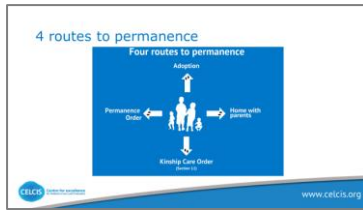
You are watching a webinar about the PACE programme from the delivery team in CELCIS at the University of Strathclyde. PACE is a Quality Improvement programme, aiming to reduce drift and delay in permanence planning for looked after children. These webinars were recorded in the spring of 2020, please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



Hello, and welcome to this the Permanence and Care Excellence, PACE, webinar for Aim 4. My name is Jimmy Paul, I'm a permanence consultant for the PACE programme at CELCIS, which is the Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection.



Scotland's ambition is 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. The word we use for this is 'permanence'. Permanence is emotional - how loved and claimed does an infant, child or young person feel? Permanence is physical – are they physically living in the home they can expect to stay in until adulthood, and until they feel interdependent. And permanence is legal - are they legally secured in their permanent home?



There are four routes to permanence.

The first on the right is at home with parents. It is always Scotland's ambition, when it is safe, that children live at home with their parents. This is supported by the ambition of [The Promise of the Independent Care Review](#). This may sometimes need extra support from the people around families to make this possible.

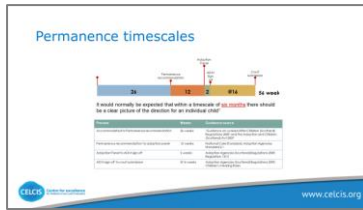
Sometimes it is not safe for children to live with their birth parents, and another route to permanence is to be legally secured in kinship care, which is with friends and family on a Section 11 Order.

The third route to permanence is a permanence order, sometimes known as a PO. This is where the local authority takes on parental responsibility for the child.

The last route to permanence is where a child is adopted.



There are four national aims for PACE. Today we'll be focusing on Aim 4, which is for when the plans for a child has been approved by the agency decision maker, sometimes known as ADM, to when their application is lodged in court. The national aim is that this is achieved within 16 weeks. As with all aims, these exist as a guidance and can be tweaked to meet local authority systems and needs and later on in this presentation, I will show you two examples of where these are different.



This diagram illustrates the permanence timescales for each of the aims and the source of the national aim timescales.

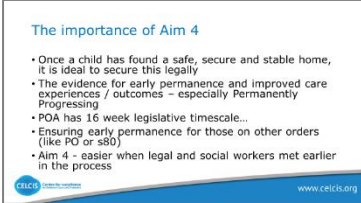
Focusing on Aim 4 - which is what you see in yellow, on the right - the ADM agency decision on the proposed permanence route for a child should take 16 weeks to submit to court. The guidance source is the Adoptions Agencies Scotland Regulations (2009) and the Children's Hearings rules.

From our work with areas all across Scotland, we know that permanence orders with authority to adopt - sometimes known as POAs - and much more likely to be lodged in court within 16 weeks because they have a legislative timescale. We know that early permanence and reducing drift and delay is important for all children though, so Aim 4 seeks to address this by including POs and Section 11s.



This slide shows the milestones in Aim 4.

From when the approval and matching panel meets, there are two weeks for the ADM to make their decision on the proposed permanence route for the child. This is usually where the Aim 4 timescales begin, but not always. Some local authorities tweak this to fit their specific system and their specific challenges. Then there are 16 weeks for the legal order to be lodged in court.



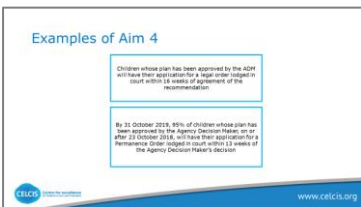
So why is Aim 4 important?

Once a child has found a safe, secure and stable home, it is ideal to secure this legally. Giving this legal security often helps many children and young people to feel also physically and emotionally secure wherever they are living. Some children understandably don't mind so much about the legal aspects. But for some feeling legally secured is extremely important and what they need to feel safe.

The evidence for early permanence and improved care experiences and outcomes is rife; this is especially pertinent from the [Permanently Progressing](#) research led by Helen Whincup.

POAs have a legislative timescale, and we also want to ensure early permanence for those on other orders.

We know that Aim 4 is easier when legal teams and social workers meet earlier in the process, and Aim 4 is so important in making sure that this happens.

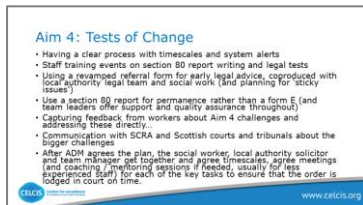


On this slide, we see two examples of Aim 4 from two different local authorities.

The first: children whose plan has been approved by the ADM will have their application for a legal order lodged in court within 16 weeks of agreement of the recommendation. This aim, as you've already seen in this presentation, was directly adapted by a local authority area.

The second is this: by 31st of October 2019, 95% of children whose plan has been approved by the agency decision maker, on or after the 23rd of October 2018, will have their application for a permanence order lodged in court within 13 weeks of the agency decision makers decision.

So you can see here, there are dates applied to this local authority aim, there is a percentage applied and this local authority decided to do this within 13 weeks rather than 16. There is variation across these aims and the essence of these national aims, that CELCIS always say is so important, is that we're focused on reducing drift and delay, whatever our aim, and we're working towards the national aim timescales in service of our children.



Aim 4, tests of change; having a clear process with timescales and system alerts has been really important for many areas for achieving Aim 4.

Detailing, usually in a flowchart or a process map, what the process is, what the expected timescales are, and building in system alerts to make sure that meetings are taking place, for example, or people know when reports need to be discussed in a multi-agency meeting. That clarity of process is really important for Aim 4, and making sure that is available to existing staff, experienced staff, but also built into the training and induction for new staff.

Some areas have held staff training events on Section 80 report writing and legal tests, and that is to make sure that staff feel confident and proficient in writing these and understanding legal tests.

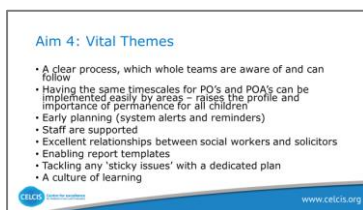
Using a revamped referral form for early legal advice, which has been co-produced with the local authority legal team and social work, has been crucial for one area for achieving Aim 4. This allows them to discuss, at a very early stage, what some of the sticky issues might be and to make plans to address those head on.

Using a Section 80 report for permanence, rather than a Form E, and making sure that the team leaders are offering support and quality assurance throughout has also been really helpful for achieving Aim 4 in several areas we've worked with.

Capturing feedback from workers about the challenges and Aim 4 and addressing these head on has been important too. One area did a deep dive exploration by speaking to all of their staff who were involved in Aim 4, including local authority legal staff and social workers, and from that, we understood that we could build in more mentoring and coaching capacity, and also some training. So that area proceeded with all of these as a result of these deep dive explorations.

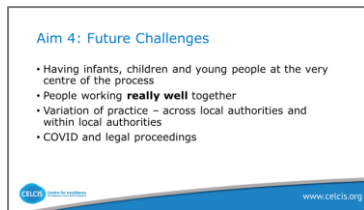
Communication with SCRA and the Scottish Courts and Tribunals about some of the bigger challenges was crucial as well. That helped to open into discussions about how we tackle sometimes bigger, 'sticky' issues for individual areas.

After the ADM agrees the plan for the child, the social worker, local authority solicitor and team manager get together and agree timescales, agree meetings - with coaching, mentoring sessions if they're needed, sometimes for less experienced staff - for each of the key tasks that need to happen for the order to be lodged in court on time. So again, this relates to some of the previous points about learning, about that essence of quality improvement, coaching and mentoring and also clarity on the process.



Aim 4 - what are the vital themes?

- Having a clear process, which whole teams are aware of and can follow.
- Having the same timescales for POs and POAs can be implemented easily by areas and it raises the profile and importance of permanence for all children.
- Early planning, with system alerts and reminders.
- Making sure that staff feels supported, often with mentoring or coaching. Some areas have also built in focus on Aim 4 into their supervision.
- Excellent relationships between social workers and solicitors. Throughout all of the Aim webinars CELCIS have been clear about how important it is to work together in a multi-agency way, and specifically for Aim 4, that relationship and those early discussions between social workers and solicitors is crucial.
- Having enabling report templates, and not ones that historically - have asked for every piece of information to be recorded and written down even if unhelpful - but making sure this is about what information is relevant and helpful.
- Tackling any sticky issues with a dedicated plan and coming together to work on those often helps it to feel less daunting, especially for social workers
- Building a culture of learning and a culture which values quality improvement.



Aim 4 - future challenges.

We know that having infants, children and young people at the very centre of the process is what we must work towards for every single child. We also know, through the Independent Care Review and the work of [The Promise](#), that this is going to be a big, big ask of everyone in Scotland in the future. So finding ways to do this, even better than we've done before, is a future challenge.

Continuing to work really well together, in multi-agency teams and alongside families that will continue to be a future challenge and certainly in Aim 4.

Understanding the variation of practice, both across local, and within local authorities, and seeking to champion and promote the use of best practice, that's crucial as well. That will continue to be a future challenge, which CELCIS has addressed by bringing together local authorities, but maintaining those relationships will be key.

And of course, all of the challenges with COVID and the disruption to legal proceedings for permanence, that will be a future challenge because there will be many children who still need legal permanence and have waited longer than they would have if COVID didn't happen. So making sure that those challenges are addressed with a clear recovery plan is another vital theme.

Thank you for listening to this recorded webinar. If you have any questions, you can email us at celcis@strath.ac.uk, and there are more PACE and Aim 4 resources that you can access on the website at: www.celcis.org

Other resources:

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

Independent Care Review and The Promise:
<https://www.carereview.scot/>

Permanently Progressing:

<https://www.stir.ac.uk/about/faculties/social-sciences/our-research/research-areas/centre-for-child-wellbeing-and-protection/research/permanently-progressing/>