Date: September 2020

Title: Aim 2, Permanence and Care Excellence Programme (PACE)

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 so please be aware that key changes in legislation, guidance and practice may have occurred since this time.
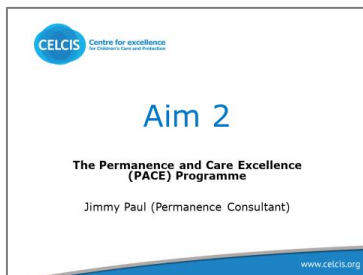

Hello there and welcome to this the Aim 2 webinar, my name is Jimmy Paul, Permanence Consultant at CELCIS - the Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection - and I work as part of the Permanence and Care Excellence programme.
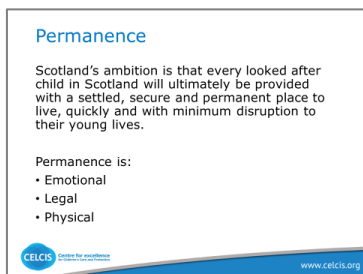

Today, we'll be talking about permanence and Aim 2, and it's important to understand what permanence means. Scotland's ambition is that every looked after child in Scotland will ultimately be provided with a settled, secure and permanent place to live, quickly and with minimum disruption to their young lives.

And there are three elements to permanence: the first is emotional; how loved and claimed do children feel? What is their sense of being loved and claimed so that they know that where they live is where they will live into adulthood? The next is legal, and lots of Aim 2 talks to legal permanence and progressing that in a timely fashion; and the third is physical, so are children living in the physical space, the home which will be their permanent place.
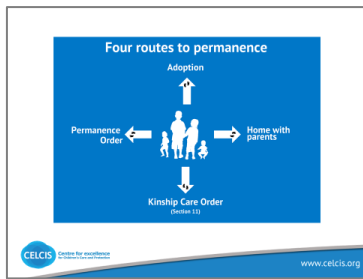
There are four routes to permanence. The first and ideally, if it is safe to do so, we want all children to live at home with their parents. With the right support that is often possible, but sometimes it is not possible, it's not safe for those children and so there are other routes to permanence as well. That can be secured on a kinship care order; it can also be secured on a permanence order and it can also be achieved through adoption.
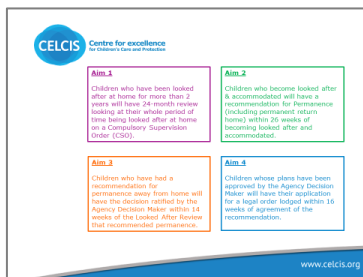
Here you see the four different aims. I won't talk to all of them, we're going to focus on Aim 2 today, and there are indeed webinars for the other aims. Aim 2 is that children who become looked after and accommodated will have a recommendation for permanence, including a permanent return home, within 26 weeks of becoming looked after and accommodated.
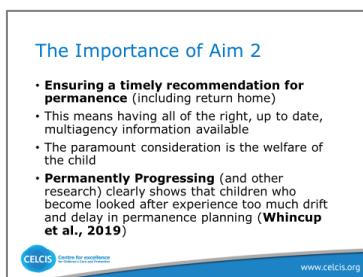
The importance of Aim 2 is ensuring a timely recommendation for permanence, including what can be a recommendation to return home. This is important, especially at this early part of the process, because we need to make sure that everything is in place for later on in the permanence journey. This means having all of the right, up-to-date, multi-agency information available. The paramount consideration must be the welfare of the child, and research - through Permanently Progressing, through CELCIS ,and through SCRA – clearly shows that children who become looked after experience too much drift and delay in their permanence planning.
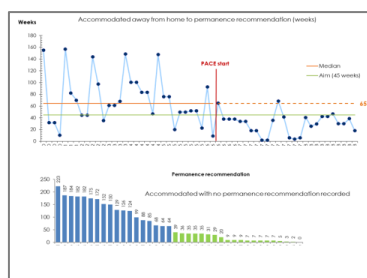
Here what you see is two charts; at the top is what is called a run chart. I'll talk you through this as it's really important for Aim 2.

Along the bottom - the x-axis - what you can see are dates that a permanence recommendation was made. Every dot on the chart is a child and how long they've been waiting. The y-axis shows the number of weeks that they've been waiting. The green line is the aim line for this local authority area (and whilst this chart has been anonymized, it is a real example from an area that worked on PACE). The red line that says 'PACE start' is, of course, when PACE started working with the local authority area and the orange line that you see – the straight orange line - is the median up until PACE started.

So what you see on the left hand side of this chart - before PACE start - is lots of variation. Children were waiting much longer to secure the permanence recommendation and there was also lots of variation in this. So there was no consistency and long waiting times.

After PACE had started working in the area, you can see a marked difference in the number of weeks that children were waiting for a permanence recommendation. There's still a little bit of variation, but the median after PACE start is much, much reduced. There's been much less drift and delay. So that, in a nutshell, is a run chart and that is an example from local authority area for the impact of PACE on Aim 2.

The chart beneath is a bar chart which shows all of the children that are still waiting for a permanence recommendation. So this is just making sure that we understand where children are in the system; to make sure that we know when these children receive a permanent recommendation they will move up to the chart above - into the run chart.

So if you look at the child on the far left who's been waiting 223 weeks, whilst being accommodated in residential; when they receive a permanent recommendation that will make its way up to the run chart above. It might make the chart look less positive than it currently does but what this process does, is make sure that children are accurately recorded and that we know where they are in the system. So these two charts and this information are really important to understanding where our children are in the system and making improvements that make a difference to children's permanence.

Some more about Aim 2: there is an expectation in Scotland that at 26 weeks we have a clear sense of what is needed for children and their permanence. The Aim for you doesn't have to start at 26 weeks; the previous example that I showed you the aim was 45 weeks, for example; areas tailor this to their data and what is both challenging and achievable to them. It doesn't have to start at 26 weeks for a permanence recommendation - but we should work towards this because of the national guidance.

Having a clear process with timescales and templates for things like agendas, is really important too. As is solid multi-agency working with partners. So, of course, social care is crucial and social workers are going to be really crucial in driving this, but health are important, education is important, local authority legal team, CHS, SCRA and the third sector too.

And children really need legal permanence, which with good planning, should support their physical and emotional permanence as well.

Here we're looking at different examples of Aim 2: again anonymised, but just to give you a flavour of what different local authority areas have done.

The first is based exactly on the Scottish Government guidance on the National Aim - by 'date', a percentage of looked after and accommodated children, accommodated on or after 'date', will have a recommendation for permanence within 26 weeks. The 'by date' is the date that you want to achieve the aim by and the other date - so accommodated on or after date - is the 'from' date, when we start measuring.

The next, by 'date', a certain percentage of children who become looked after and accommodated, on or after 'date', will have a permanence recommendation within 40 weeks of becoming looked after and accommodated. So again this local authority area knew that 26 weeks

wouldn't be achievable for them, but they set the stretch aim of 40 weeks which would be challenging enough for them, and they could definitely work towards that without losing motivation.

And the last example that I'll share with you: by date, xx percentage of children, including those who have a plan for rehabilitation home or kinship care, who become looked after and accommodated on or after date will have a permanence recommendation at the legal advice meeting within 36 weeks of becoming looked after and accommodated. This example shows how it is crucial that areas tailor their aims to be challenging and also that it fits within the system in which you are working in. And this local authority area knew that it was achievable for them, with different tests of change in place, for them to achieve a permanent recommendation at 36 weeks, but they would do so at their legal advice meeting.
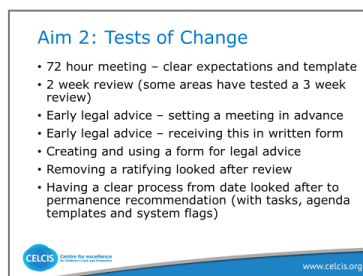
Here, we'll look at different tests of change for Aim 2 in local authorities across Scotland.

For the 72-hour meeting: having clear expectations and an agenda template for what to achieve at this meeting, but also monitoring and making sure that 72-hour meeting is actually happening within 72 hours.

The two-week review - and some areas have tested a three-week review others have tested a four-week review - but the essence of this test of change was to make sure that meetings were happening not long after the 72-hour meeting but with enough time to plan and make sure that dates were in the diary for future meetings. That the expectations were clear for all partners and parents for what needed to happen.

Early legal advice; setting a meeting in advance so making sure that legal advice was sought but making sure that a meeting was set so that that would happen in advance. This meant that we weren't reacting further down the line and requesting legal advice at short notice. Building this change into the system meant that we were getting that legal advice much earlier.

As was receiving advice in written form - testing this to make sure that a face-to-face meeting, for example, didn't need to happen. That allowed for much greater flexibility and receiving that legal advice much earlier. As was creating and using a form for legal advice too.

Removing a ratifying looked after review; so some areas had too many meetings and were able to reduce the number of meetings that they were having by removing a ratifying looked after review. So that meant that meetings weren't happening for meeting's sake. So by removing a meeting happening, we were able to achieve a looked after review where the recommendation could be made much sooner.

Having a clear process from date looked after to permanence recommendation, with tasks, agenda templates and system flags, was helpful. One area built a clear process - they illustrated it in a flow chart - and that was then used with all staff, new staff and existing staff and that was the established process that would be followed, in that their information management system would also send out reminders for when meetings need to happen.
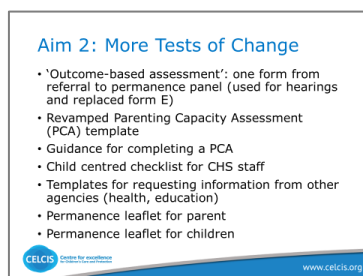
Aim 2: more tests of change. The first is outcome-based assessment: having one form from referral to permanence panel and that form being used in hearings and replacing the Form E - this meant that there was much less duplication of work in completing paperwork.

Using a revamped parenting capacity assessment template; social workers got together and revamped the parenting capacity assessment template that they had. They were able to reduce the amount of information that needed to be recorded and make sure it was more relevant to those families, so that there was much less wastage in what was recorded and the questions that were asked, and the work that was done with family, was much more relevant.

Having a guidance note for completing a parenting capacity assessment: this was really helpful for social workers, and particularly new social workers, so they knew how to complete the revamped parenting capacity assessment in the same area.

Having a child-centred checklist for CHS staff - and primarily the Children's Hearing System Chair. This checklist uses different colours to illustrate the different parts of a hearing and to make sure that each of those are fulfilled. But also, it encourages and gives handy tips for how a Chair might make sure that the child is at the very centre of that hearing and, of course, it gives

examples from if the child is an infant, the child is non-verbal and different situations that a Chair might face. So the checklist was really enabling for the Chair, and it made sure that the child was at the centre of the hearing. This built greater cohesion in hearings. It was tested in multiple local authorities.

Having templates for requesting information from other agencies, such as health and education, this made staff feel much more enabled in approaching those areas; they could follow the template, that made sure that the agencies were happy in receiving these forms and this information and this request, and they were sure of the information they could provide.

And then having permanent leaflets for parents - which explained what permanence is - and permanence leaflets for children which explain to them in a child-friendly way, what permanence is.
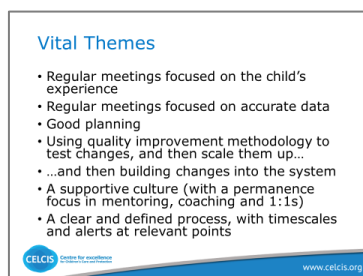
Some of the vital themes then that I'll pick out that are really important for us to consider.

Regular meetings focused on the child's experience, making sure that we consider all three forms of permanence – that's physical, emotional and legal.

Having regular meetings, which are focused on accurate data; so that we're on top of Aim 2, that we know where children are in the system and that the data can be cleaned. Looking at the data and scrutinising it may show us that the data might not be fully accurate, and that's important as well.

Having really good planning, that's crucial too and building a good flowchart of the process is crucial for Aim 2, so we can be clear about what to expect from all agencies, and with what timescales.

Using quality improvement methodology to test changes and then to scale them up. Making sure that we're seeking feedback and learning along the way, that we build and build and build, and that we test them and they get better with each test of change. Then, when the time is right, building these changes into the system; making sure that the new process can become the norm.

Having a supportive culture with a permanence focus in mentoring, coaching and one-to-ones. So permanence and legal permanence and planning is

discussed in each of these ways, so the staff feel supported. What had been heard from CELCIS staff frequently was that staff felt like different parts of the permanence journey - sometimes the parenting capacity assessment, sometimes filling out the Form E - could feel difficult, it could feel onerous, and it could feel hard to gather that information. So making sure that these things were discussed regularly, so that staff felt supported was really crucial as well. And having a clear and defined process, with timescales and alerts at relevant points, that was crucial too.
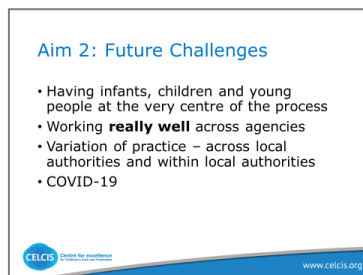
So some of the future challenges then for Aim 2.

It continues to be the challenge of having infants, children and young people at the very centre of this process. This is something that's not always easy to do, it's not easy to achieve and yet it needs to be achieved and individualised. The infant, child and young people need to have their experience and story heard. This remains an ongoing challenge as all of Scotland continue to learn how to do this really well.

Working well across agencies; so, of course, social work are really central in this, but health are crucial as well, education, local authority legal teams, CHS and SCRA, third sector as well - we need to make sure that we have really good relationships across these agencies so that we can achieve legal permanence much sooner, reducing drift and delay whilst we do that.

Variation of practice; we know that across local authorities, and indeed within local authorities, there's huge variation of practice and understanding what works really well and building on that is crucial. Sharing learning across Scotland and across local authorities is crucial as well. So that's another future challenge - how do we build and maintain strong networks within local authorities and across local authorities.

And, of course, a very recent challenge in COVID-19 and how we continue to work towards legal permanence, how we reduce drift and delay with all of the challenges that this has brought.

Final Thoughts

- Data – accurate, up to date, useful?
- Really listening to families and children (creative, inclusive participation)
- The language we use
- Independent Care Review recommendations

Some final thoughts then: making sure that we have accurate up-to-date and useful data and that we regularly meet and understand what the data is telling us.

Really listening to families and children and being creative and inclusive in our thoughts around participation, so that it really isn't children and families fitting the system but it's the other way around.

The language we use; so even the word permanence is not a word that's often used in birth family situations, so that like some of the other language we use might not be familiar to the families that we work with. We must make sure that we're really cautious and careful about the language we use and that we take time to explain what things mean to families - that's crucial as well - and can support the emotional physical and legal permanence of children.

And, of course, the [Independent Care Review](#) recommendations; these are far-reaching recommendations and implementation will take 10 years from now, at the time of recording, in summer 2020.

And it's really important that each local authority, each agency is ready to adapt to the work of implementation and ready to work towards achieving those recommendations.

Thank you very much for listening to this webinar. If you have any questions you can contact us at celsis@strath.ac.uk and the Aim 2 resources are on the website at www.celcis.org.

But there are also other webinars for each of the aims, those can all be found on the website as well.

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/

SCRA Resources:
https://www.scra.gov.uk/resources/