

# Gathering PACE in Dumfries & Galloway

Dumfries & Galloway has set out to improve the timescales for children reaching their permanent destination by improving decision made at Hearings. This has been in collaboration with CELCIS on the Permanence and Care Excellence (PACE) Programme.

## Method

Those in Dumfries & Galloway became aware of the need for having better assessments and recommendations at Hearings. This was discussed in multiagency PACE 'Champions Meetings'. This resulted in the following tests of change taking place through PACE:

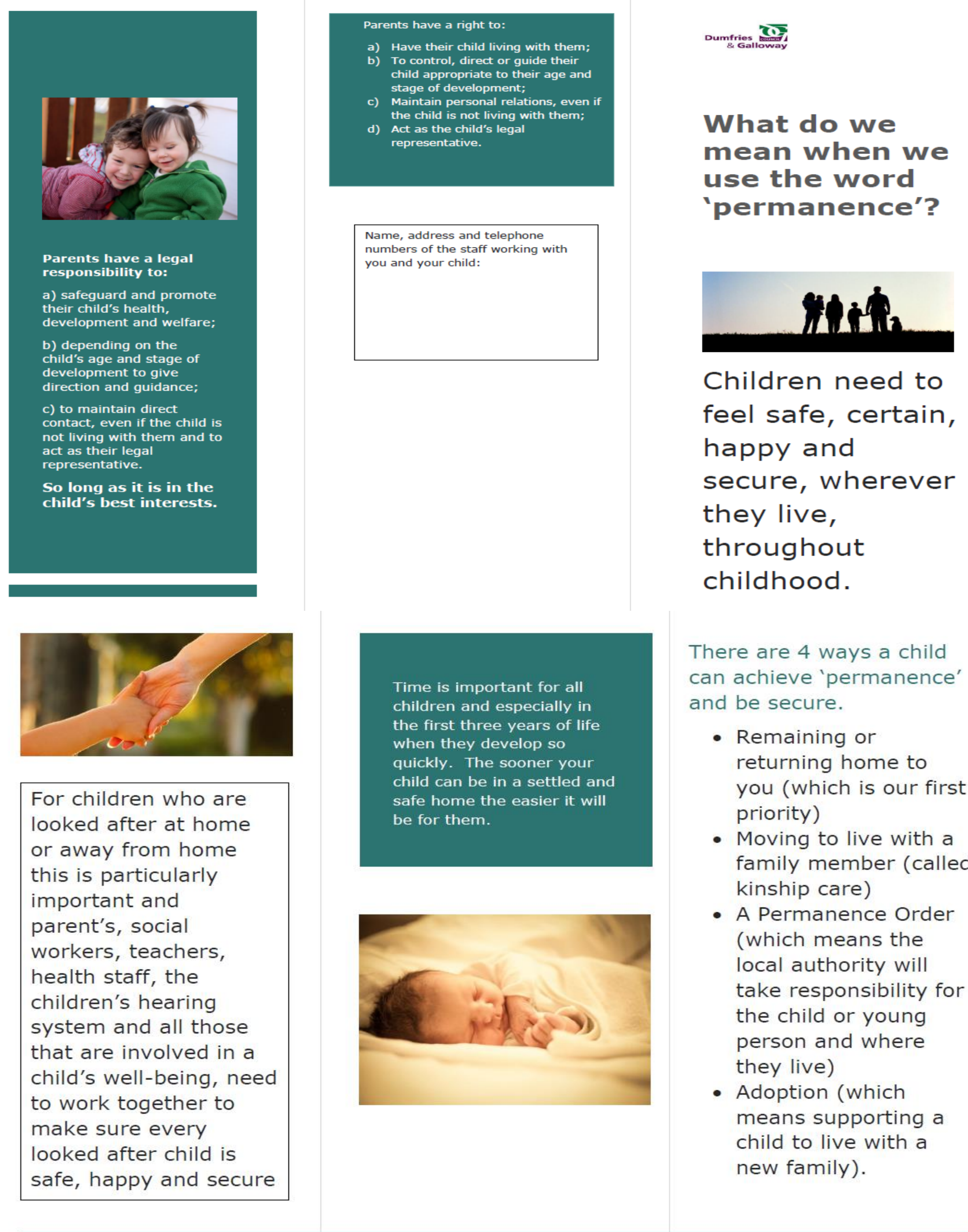
- Providing guidance on reports to Hearings
- Thematically collating feedback for all Hearings by Social Workers and Panel Members by asking for feedback forms to be completed
- Introducing 'timelines' which illustrate key milestones in the child journey, to be used at Hearings to inform decision-making
- Introducing a child-friendly permanence leaflet to manage expectations and build a shared understanding

## Process Change

The following process changes were made to achieve the aim:

- Measuring progress using feedback forms
- Measuring progress on timescales using Permanence forms
- Sharing child friendly permanence leaflet at earliest opportunity

## Permanence Leaflet



The leaflet is divided into several sections:

- Parents have a legal responsibility to:**
  - a) safeguard and promote their child's health, development and welfare;
  - b) depending on the child's age and stage of development to give direction and guidance;
  - c) to maintain direct contact, even if the child is not living with them and to act as their legal representative.

**So long as it is in the child's best interests.**
- Parents have a right to:**
  - a) Have their child living with them;
  - b) To control, direct or guide their child appropriate to their age and stage of development;
  - c) Maintain personal relations, even if the child is not living with them;
  - d) Act as the child's legal representative.
- Name, address and telephone numbers of the staff working with you and your child:**
- What do we mean when we use the word 'permanence'?**
  - Children need to feel safe, certain, happy and secure, wherever they live, throughout childhood.
- There are 4 ways a child can achieve 'permanence' and be secure.**
  - Remaining or returning home to you (which is our first priority)
  - Moving to live with a family member (called kinship care)
  - A Permanence Order (which means the local authority will take responsibility for the child or young person and where they live)
  - Adoption (which means supporting a child to live with a new family).
- Time is important for all children and especially in the first three years of life when they develop so quickly. The sooner your child can be in a settled and safe home the easier it will be for them.**
- For children who are looked after at home or away from home this is particularly important and parent's, social workers, teachers, health staff, the children's hearing system and all those that are involved in a child's well-being, need to work together to make sure every looked after child is safe, happy and secure**

## Achievements

The changes resulted in the following achievements:

- Better decisions being made at Hearings
- Benefitting from robust analysis and from better quality, well presented information
- Clearer recommendations being made
- Attachments being included– Contact Agreement, Child's Plan and timelines
- All of the above has been collected anecdotally from Social Workers and Panel Members through completing PDSA forms.



## Conclusions

- Good guidance on reports to Hearings improves decision making by ensuring all relevant information is captured and shared
- Seeking (and regularly reviewing) feedback it can be beneficial for Hearings, and can help to facilitate helpful dialogue between professional groups
- Timelines can help to illustrate a lot of information by providing a fuller picture of a child's journey in an easy to understand way. There is a strong feeling amongst the multiagency group that this has helped to ensure the best possible decision making

## Key Learning Points

- Improving the quality of comprehensive assessments can improve the permanence process
- Good guidance recommendations can improve the permanence process by supporting staff with report writing
- Attachments to reports for Hearings can improve decision making
- Keeping parents and children aware of process and language is important and ensures a shared understanding
- Data is hugely important to help evidence progress

## Next steps

- We need data. We will gain data for the important milestones in the child's journey by getting the right staff together and extracting data from the new information management system
- This will provide the opportunity to evidence improvements in the permanence timescales and journey of children
- We will continue to seek feedback on timelines and improve them accordingly
- We will continue to collaborate and try new tests of change
- We will revisit the structure of PACE in Dumfries, with key members changing roles



SCOTTISH  
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