

“Every conversation starts with the child”

Care Planning and Permanence



Some years ago someone much brighter than me said; *if you are not clear where you want to go Dallas, how will you work out how to get there* and it stuck with me. If we do not have a long term plan for a child how can we ensure that we are supporting/challenging/advocating/planning for them to get there?

Isabel Trowler in Care Proceedings in England: The case for clear blue water, makes some really relevant observations about families and the use of care proceedings (or not) to secure permanence. The document is not especially long and really worth a read, if you haven't already.

https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.808960!/file/Clear_Blue_Water_Policy_Briefing.pdf

She provides evidence regarding the increased use of supervision orders and suggests that we reflect on 'thin red line' decisions...

The increase in Supervision Orders in England over the period the study covered is very striking. Whilst the proportion has not changed, the volume of children and families being brought into care proceedings, only to remain together or be reunited at the end, has increased. Local authorities are making an increasing number of applications for Supervision Orders but they are also making an increasing number of applications for Care Orders to remove children, but which result in the Courts making Supervision Orders. This must raise the question as to whether families subject to these thin, red line decisions, where the decision to remove a child from his or her parents could go either way, should be diverted away from Court in the first place.

This week's blog has been put together by Martha Price (Advanced Practitioner), to link in to the publication of 'Our Approach to Permanence': a document which sets out York Children's Services Permanence Policy. There is a lot of additional information, guidance and research available on this topic and there are links to a number of resources at the end of this blog, including links to York Social Care Procedures.

['Permanence in York means children and young people have a safe stable home for the duration of their childhood?'](#)

To start considering this topic, it is always helpful to reflect on what we would want if this was our own child, sibling, or extended family member's future. When we think about aspirations for our children we think about their future adult life, not just their childhood. Have we made every effort to ensure that the children we work with have a permanence plan that will provide them with the secure, safe and consistent future they deserve? The importance of considering the child's long term needs from the start of care and permanency planning is a theme we return to later in the blog.

[What is the difference between care planning and permanency planning?](#)

Care planning and permanency planning are interconnected, as considering how to achieve permanency for a child should be at the heart of all our decisions as social workers. Permanence is about having a family for life and a sense of belonging and connectedness. How permanence will be secured for a child should be set out in their care plan.

The primary aims of care planning are to ensure that:

- Young people have a coherent plan for their future and that they do not "drift" in care.
- Young people, and where appropriate their parents, are fully consulted and participate in key decisions about them.
- The care system works in an optimum manner to ensure young people are safeguarded and achieve the best possible outcomes, including those for health and education.
- Transitions are successfully managed – in particular the transition to adulthood.

The objective of permanency planning is 'to ensure that children have a secure, stable and loving family to support them through childhood and beyond and to give them a sense of security' (DfE, 2015). Permanence should provide high-quality and stable care, support children's sense of identity and belonging, and connect past, present and future through childhood and into adult life.

York's Permanence Policy describes the three aspects of permanency for a child:

- Legal permanence (ensuring whoever is caring for the child has Parental Responsibility or that there is somebody in a position to effectively exercise Parental Responsibility);
- Psychological permanence (when the child feels attached to an adult who provides a stable, loving and secure relationship.);
- Physical or environmental permanence (involves a stable home environment within a familiar neighbourhood and community that meets the child's identity needs).

For more information regarding the York procedures for care planning and permanence planning please see:

- <https://yorkchildcare.proceduresonline.com/chapters/contents.html#luc>
- Our Approach to Permanence

Individual solutions for individual children

In her review of evidence on permanence for the Care Inquiry, Boddy (2013) highlighted the importance of 'individual solutions for individual children' and the need to support routes not only to legal permanence, but also to place equal value on other ways of achieving permanence (for example, support for children and families at the 'edges of care', permanent return to birth parents, permanence in shared or full-time care).

Permanence can be achieved in the following ways:

- Staying/Returning home
- Placement with Family or Friends/Connected Persons
- Special Guardianship Orders
- Child Arrangement Orders
- Adoption
- Long Term Fostering
- Staying put
- Residential Care (in specific circumstances)
- Supported living/lodgings
- Private Fostering

A long-term perspective

The Children and Social Care Act 2017 reinforces the need for all decisions relating to placement options to assign proper emphasis to a child's future long- term needs. When starting the care planning process for a young person it is therefore crucial to look ahead and consider how the child's needs will be met for the rest of their childhood

Claire Mo, Service Manager for Children in Permanent Placement, advises of the importance of maintaining a long-term perspective of the child's needs and best interests, where you are always able to anticipate the next stage. As parents we have hopes and aspirations for our children and this is no different for our looked after children. Planning for success in adulthood starts in childhood, from offering good role models to raise aspirations, encouraging progress within school, taxiing round to clubs and activities to promote interests and so on. In promoting good long term care planning it is important the building blocks are put in place to work towards long term goals. In identifying those goals you can work backwards to identify what support the child will need to meet their needs in the longer term, considering questions such as:

What are your hopes and aspirations for the child?

What does good care look for this individual child for the rest of their childhood?

Children and young people at the centre of planning

'Empathy is a vital social work skill when working with young people. Imagine what it would be like having a meeting planned to examine your life: what would that feel like? How would you respond? How would you want it to be organised? Walking in the shoes of the young person in this way will help ensure you practice to the highest possible professional level.' (N. Frost 2019)

A systematic review of research literature has found children in care wanted more involvement in decisions made about their lives (Minnis and Walker, 2012). Most said the decision to take them into care had been right, but they often experienced little or no choice about where they would live.

It is essential that the child or young person is held at the centre of care and permanency planning – both by ensuring that the best interests of the young person are actively pursued and in ensuring that young people participate as fully as possible in the process, being listened to and feeling heard. Enabling young people to play an active role in care planning should help to boost their 'resilience' – their sense of control and influence over their own lives (see Williams, 2005). For this reason it is also important for us to consider co-production of plans with children and their parents (see PSW Blog 30 July 2020).

Here are some suggestions for how we can ensure young people participate fully in their reviews:

- Care experienced people often recall feeling stigmatised – for example, by being withdrawn from school classes to attend reviews. They should be consulted about what works best for them in terms of dates, timing, venues and attendance.

- The review should be organised in a young person-centred manner. Accessible language should be used, avoiding the use of jargon. The venue should be appropriate and comfortable and the particular needs of the young person should be taken into account.
- The young person may require an advocate, who will ensure their voice is heard and their best interests are addressed.
- Young people should be enabled to participate in a way that suits them – they may want to communicate using Makaton, for example, or may want to use creative methods, such by providing a drawing or a poem for the review to consider.

As well as involving young people it is important to engage their parents and carers in the planning and review process. We know from research that many young people will return to live with their family after being in care. It is important to do everything possible to ensure that links with families are maintained and developed, as long as this is consistent with the best interests of the young person.

There are a number of resources for working with young people and including them in their reviews, including electronic versions of consultation documents to use in reviews and conferences and these can be found here; S:\Childrens_Services\Children's_Social_Care\IRO monitoring\YP Guides and consultation papers\CYPIC review

Some training for your diary; MyLO will shortly be advertising some new dates for Graded Care Profile training online. There are 2 dates, Nov 24th or Dec 4th, and attendees need to be available for the whole day as there is an activity to be done independently between the zoom sessions; the training on both dates includes case studies of using the tool with young people.

If you haven't yet had the opportunity to undertake this training can I encourage you to book yourself on; without the training you can't be licensed to use the NSPCC GCP2 tool which provides us with an evidence base to support our assessments when identifying neglect.

Finally, please remember to share your thoughts on this blog and any other with me, your feedback is vital, is this blog useful? What are your thoughts/tips on recording?

What is going well	What is not going well	What would you like to change
Comments		

Dallas

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Resources

In England care planning is closely regulated by the [Care Planning, Placement and Case Review \(England\) Regulations 2010](#) and the associated statutory guidance (DfE, 2015), a set of regulations that all professionals working with looked after young people should be familiar with. These regulations supplement the key care planning sections of the Children Act, 1989, primarily sections 20-23.

York Procedures on Care Planning and Permanence Planning:

https://yorkchildcare.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_dec_look_aft.html#care_plan

https://yorkchildcare.proceduresonline.com/chapters/g_perm_plan.html

List of resources from Research in Practice

<https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/children/news-views/2020/october/adoption-placement-permanence-and-contact-for-children-young-people-and-families/>

Frost, N (2019) Care planning and review: quick guide. Practice Guidance. Community Care Inform[online]

<https://www.ccinform.co.uk/practice-guidance/care-planning-and-review-quick-guide/>

[accessed: 10 November 2020]

Wilkinson J & Bowyer S. (2017). *Comparing placement options to meet children and young people's current and future needs: Strategic Briefing (2017)*. Dartington: Research in Practice.