



**Meeting: Policy and Development and Decision Group (JCT) Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2017**

**Wards Affected: All**

**Report Title: Torbay Children's Services: Permanence Planning Policy**

**Is the decision a key decision? No**

**When does the decision need to be implemented?**

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## **1. Proposal and Introduction**

- 1.1 Consecutive Ofsted Inspections have concluded that Torbay Children's Services has not, in the past, placed sufficient emphasis on the importance of permanence planning. This has meant that too many children have either been moved from placement to placement, or been placed, on a long term basis, in placements that do not afford them permanence. The weaknesses in permanence planning have also contributed to the high numbers of children looked after (CLA).
- 1.2 As part of the improvement work underway following the Ofsted inspection a more dynamic and thoughtful approach towards permanence planning is being developed, supported by the revised policy and accompanying practice guidance. The revised policy, a copy of which is attached at Appendix 1, sets out Torbay's vision for achieving permanence and outlines the practical steps that practitioners and managers will take in order to improve performance and outcomes for children.
- 1.3 The policy has been developed by the interim Assistant Director with input from our improvement partner Hampshire County Council. The policy is supported by the Pathways to Permanence Practice Guidance which shall be issued to all Children's Social Care Managers and Practitioners and made available on the Children's Services intranet space. The policy will be subject to annual review.

## **2. Reason for Proposal**

- 2.1 For the purpose of this policy, permanence is defined as a framework of emotional, physical and legal conditions that gives a child a sense of commitment, security and continuity of care throughout their childhood and into adult life.
- 2.2 Permanence is also defined by reference to the child's need for attachment, security, continuity, commitment and identity rather than by placement type. This

allows for permanence plans to be made for children in a variety of different ways which recognise their individual needs, wishes and circumstances.

**‘Permanence is the framework of emotional permanence (attachment), physical permanence (stability) and legal permanence (the carer has parental responsibility for the child) which gives a child a sense of security, continuity, commitment and identity. The objective of planning for permanence is therefore to ensure that children have a secure, stable and loving family to support them through childhood and beyond. Permanence provides an underpinning framework for all social work’**

2.3 Torbay Children’s Services, as corporate parents for looked after children, will work diligently to find permanent, safe homes for children, as soon as practicable. Permanence planning requires good care planning that is tried and tested by our quality assurance processes, including the scrutiny and challenge of our Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs). The best possible care involves giving children security, stability and love throughout their childhood and beyond.

2.4 Torbay’s policy towards delivering and achieving permanence is built on a number of key operating principles:

- The wishes and views of children will be taken into consideration
- Children will understand their own plan for permanence
- Decisions will be taken in as timely a way as possible
- Every plan for permanence will have a contingency
- Consideration will always be given to solutions from within the child’s own family and social network
- A family meeting will be held if children have to live away from their families/community
- The importance of children experiencing permanence, belonging, security and stability, including education, will be the primary considerations at all times, including prior to them becoming looked after by the local authority
- We will ensure that due consideration is given to a child’s ethnicity, language, religion or culture when considering permanent placements
- We will ensure that children, wherever this is consistent with their safety and welfare, maintain contact with family members/significant others
- We will place siblings together, wherever that is possible or desirable
- We will support children into independence when the time is right
- We are committed to ensuring that children have a clear sense of identity
- There is no one size fits all solution to securing permanence
- We will keep arrangements under regular review

- 2.5 The impact of the revised policy will be monitored through a variety of mechanisms including Permanence Panel, the CLA tracker meeting chaired by the Assistant Director, Children's Improvement Board and Children's Services Members Monitoring Group. Key performance measures will include placement stability, CLA population and personal, educational and social outcomes for children looked after.

### **3. Recommendation(s)/Proposed Decision**

- 3.1 The Joint Commissioning Team Policy Development and Decision Group is asked approve the Permanence Policy attached at Appendix 1 and agree to receive updates on a regular basis.

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Children's Services: Permanence Planning Policy March 2017

### **Background Documents**

None

