

Achieving Permanence

Programme Participants' Workbook

Part 3: module 3

Introduction

Welcome to Part 3 of the *Achieving Permanence Programme Participants' Workbook* to support and record your learning development in relation to module 3 of the programme.

The achieving permanence programme is introduced in the *Achieving Permanence Introduction and Overview* document and you are expected to be familiar with that and the outline of the programme as a whole including:

- the background and context for the programme
- the vision and purpose
- the learning process
- the programme structure and timetable.

However, *this* document (and the companion workbook parts linked to the other three modules comprising the full programme of study and learning) is intended to be a practical programme *workbook* for you to use: to complete, fill in and build up as a record of your learning and reflection throughout each module and across the programme as a whole. Having this as a 'digital' document that you can add to as you progress through the programme seemed the most useful format. We hope that the following notes help you to understand the way that the four parts of the workbook (linked to each module) can help you in your learning and development across the whole programme.

After this introduction, each of the four parts of the workbook follow the week-by-week format of each module and set out the following:

Module exercises, tasks and activities

Every module includes exercises, tasks and activities; these are set out in each of the four parts of the workbook with spaces for you to record notes and your responses to the tasks, where appropriate.

Material for preparation and use in the training workshops

The workbook also includes some material that you are likely to refer to during the formal training workshop that is included within each module of learning.

Policy and practice briefing paper

As part of the programme, you are required to undertake some project work in relation to a particular area of interest, identifying and exploring (through reading and research and reflection on practice) a specific topic of relevance to your work to achieve permanence for children and young adults.

Ideally, this would be a topic relating directly to your own specialist area of practice or service and the children, young people or young adults with whom you work and the issues that one or more may experience.

You are required to prepare a 'briefing paper' on the selected topic to share with participants on the programme, with your line manager and supervisor (as part of the portfolio requirements), with your colleagues and other professionals as appropriate – and to share the insights and expertise directly with the children, young people or young adults and their carers with whom you work, where appropriate.

Portfolio

Finally, in order to complete the programme, participants are required to compile a *portfolio* of work that will be reviewed by their line manager, supervisor or the person within their agency who is identified to support your learning and progress and verify completion of the programme. Where there are tasks within each module (and the related workbook) that will contribute to the completion of the *portfolio*, these are indicated in the relevant part of the workbook. The final, fourth part of the workbook includes more detail on completing the portfolio work.

Additional learning material

Alongside the workbooks and the material included in them, additional learning resource material is also available including reading and case studies – this is available in the online resources that support the programme.

Module 3: Making the permanence decision

In this third module of the programme we will be exploring how social workers, alongside their managers, legal departments and other professionals, come to the right decision for children to ensure that they have a permanent home which meets their emotional, physical and mental needs. Module three provides an overview of the legal system, ethics, core principles of legislation, and the role of precedent and case law. Its aim is to ensure that decision-making is evidence-informed and based on an understanding of legal processes.

Throughout the module you are encouraged to consider, explore and reflect on the following questions:

Questions for participants

- how does legislation, guidance and case law support decision-making and planning?
- what issues need to be taken into account in contingency planning?
- how can you ensure that your decision-making rests on critical thinking?
- which model of systemic assessment is the best fit with your own practice/the context in which you work?
- what gets in the way of timely, person-centred planning in your own practice/the context in which you work? How can you overcome these challenges?
- what types of evidence inform plans in your own practice/the context in which you work? Is this evidence base adequate?
- how do you manage decision-making where there is complexity and uncertainty?

Week 1: Suspicious minds

Exercises, tasks and activities

- 1) Read part 4 of the programme case study - Chloe leaves placement.
- 2) Consider and answer this series of questions:
 - a) how might each child be feeling; Jack, Chloe, River, and Skye?
 - b) what will be helpful for them?
 - c) what support do the carers need?
 - d) what else should happen?
- 3) Outline the evidence that informs your answers (e.g. personal/professional experience, research evidence, local or national practice guidance).
- 4) Watch the video by 'Suspicious Minds'.
- 5) Reflect on how this material resonates with your own experience in the court arena.

To assist with task 1) to 3)

1) Cross-module case study material

d) Chloe has left her placement

While the foster family were away on holiday together, Chloe held Jack under the water in the swimming pool. Chloe thought this was a joke. Jack, Audrey and Norman did not. Audrey and Norman asked for Chloe to be removed from placement as they felt unable to keep Jack and, potentially, River and Skye safe.

Leslie, the supervising social worker knows this is exactly the situation Audrey and Norman had been telling her they feared was emerging from Chloe's behaviour, and that they had already told her that, should they feel unable to keep other children safe from Chloe, they would be asking for her to be moved on. As Audrey had kept saying, that was what she wanted the help for so this could be avoided. Although Leslie's manager asked her to try to persuade Audrey and Norman to keep Chloe, they refused, and she has moved.

2) Consider and answer these questions and, 3) outline the evidence that informs your answers (for example, personal/professional experience, research evidence, local or national practice guidance).

Question and your response	Evidence that informs answer
a) How might each child be feeling; Jack, Chloe, River, and Skye?	
b) What will be helpful for them?	

Question and your response	Evidence that informs answer
c) What support do the carers need?	
d) What else should happen?	

To assist with task 5)

On watching the film, does this resonate with your own experience in the court arena; and if so, how?

Notes:

Week 2: The legal context

Essential tasks and activities

- 1) Read the programme briefing paper Achieving Permanence: Law and Statutory Guidance
- 2) Read the programme briefing paper Achieving Permanence: Case Law
- 3) Address a series of questions set out in the participant workbook.

To assist with task 2)

There are a number of links to other blogs and case law throughout the article, you are encouraged to consider the extra reading suggested although this is not a requirement.

Thoughts and feelings arising from the material.

Notes:

Think of your own caseload and ideas which are emerging about any of those cases. Please record a summary for your own learning.

Notes:

Now please consider the following questions and note down your answers and consider what needs clarifying – questions to be brought to the workshop

1. How does care precedent affect threshold decisions?

2. Name the key pieces of legislation which relation to permanence and care planning - consider which are the most important parts of these Acts in relation to care planning.

3. How does the Human Rights Act 1998 impact on care proceedings and permanence planning in particular? Which parts of the Human Rights Act 1998 should you be particularly mindful of in relation to permanence planning?

4. What is the difference between burden and standard of proof and a) why is this important when writing court statements and other reports for the courts? b) how important is this difference when making decision whether to initiate care proceedings or not?

5. Does a child have the 'right' to be raised by their birth family? Please explain the reasons for your answer.

6. What are the main factors to consider when deciding between a Special Guardianship Order and Adoption for a child?

6) Some final considerations/reflections, think about the following:

1. How confident do you feel giving evidence in court?
2. Consider how best to convey your expertise, knowledge and experience in a court setting and in particular consider:
 - a) what is risk? How does that change over time?
 - b) how do you convey both severity and likelihood for harm in your reports?
 - c) do you set out clearly the difference between fact and opinion in your reports and are you always clear about the difference?
 - d) what kind of research/evidence do you use in your court reports and when giving evidence in court? How confident are you in doing this?

Notes:

Week 3: Reading and preparation for the workshop

Essential tasks and activities

- 1) Colin Green's special report on Assessment and Analysis, and its Appendix, both written for CareKnowledge, June 2017.
- 2) Consider your learning goals for the workshop.

Choice of further reading to be guided by specific learning goals identified by the participant with their manager/supervisor

- Braye, S. and Preston-Shoot, M. (2010) *Practising Social Work Law*. (3rd Edition). Palgrave MacMillan.
- Brown, L. and Turney, D. (2014) *Analysis and Critical Thinking in Assessment*. Resource pack. (2nd ed) Dartington: Research in Practice.
- Tunstill, J and Willow, C (2017) Professional Social Work and the Defence of Children's and their Family's Rights in a Period of Austerity; a case study. *Social Work and Social Sciences Review*, 19, 1, 40-65.
- Wilkins, M. & Farmer, E. (2015). 'Reunification: An Evidence-Informed Framework for Return Home Practice'. NSPCC.

To assist with task 2)

Preparation for the workshop and review

My goals for today are:

In order to achieve these goals I will need to:

My new learning goals at the end of this workshop:

Reviewing the workshop

What has been the main learning today?

How does that fit with my personal learning objectives?

Commitment to action – I can and I will.

Week 5: Planning for permanence

Essential tasks and activities

- 1) Reflect on your understanding of 'evidence-based' practice using the questions below
- 2) Examine your plan for the children/young adult in your own ongoing case study
- 3) Prepare a brief critical analysis (maximum 500 words) that addresses the questions:
 - where and how does the plan communicate the child/young adult's unique needs?
 - where and how does the plan advocate for the child?

To assist with task 1)

- a) Do you routinely use research/evidence in your reports and assessments? If so how do you assess the quality of the research you are using?

Notes:

- b) Why in your opinion do social workers struggle at times to ensure that their practice is based on research evidence?

Notes:

c) It has been argued that there is an expectation that social workers are able to identify, evaluate, apply evidence relevant to the client's issue and make practice decisions which includes informing service users of the empirical evidence pertaining to the treatment and nature of their problems (Jenson 2007). Do you think this is realistic? Do you manage to do this in your practice with children and families?

Notes:

d) How could you try to make your practice more informed by research?

Notes:

To assist with task 2) and 3)

Thinking about the plan for the children/young adult in your ongoing reference case study.

A brief critical analysis (maximum 500 words) that addresses the questions:

- Where and how does the plan communicate the child/young adult's unique needs?
- Where and how does the plan advocate for the child?

Week 6: Transformative practice

Essential tasks and activities:

- 1) Review the plan for the children/young adult in your own ongoing case study, with an emphasis on its compliance with SMART and ExACT principles.

Consider your plan in relation to the detail that should be included in permanence plans for children who are subject to care or supervision orders – if this is not directly relevant to your work, then consider the relevance of the requirements as good practice guidance in relation to all plans for permanence.

Prepare a brief critical analysis (maximum 500 words) that presents the rationale for, and an evaluation of the planned interventions and the timetable for their implementation.

Please note that you are asked to include work in relation to task 1) in the programme portfolio (see guidance and portfolio requirements).

- 2) Review the plan for the children/young adult in your own ongoing case study and prepare a brief critical analysis (maximum 250 words) that presents the rationale for, and an evaluation of its contingency plan.

To assist with task 1)

The Children and Social Work Act, 2017 sets out the detail that should be included in permanence plans for children who are subject to care or supervision orders. At Part 8, it has replaced subsection 3B of section 31 of the Children Act 1989 (care and supervision orders) with these provisions:

(a) such of the plan's provisions setting out the long-term plan for the upbringing of the child concerned as provide for any of the following:

- (i) the child to live with any parent of the child's or with any other member of, or any friend of, the child's family
- (ii) adoption
- (iii) long-term care not within sub-paragraph (i) or (ii).

(b) such of the plan's provisions as set out any of the following:

- (i) the impact on the child concerned of any harm that he or she suffered or was likely to suffer
- (ii) the current and future needs of the child (including needs arising out of that impact)
- (iii) the way in which the long-term plan for the upbringing of the child would meet those current and future needs.

In relation to the plan in your own ongoing reference case study – how well does it comply with SMART and ExACT principles (addressed in the workshop)?

Provide a brief critical analysis (maximum of 500 words) presenting the rationale for the planned interventions (with an evaluation of them) – and the timetable for their implementation.

As noted above, you are asked to include work in relation to task 1) in the programme portfolio (see guidance and portfolio requirements).

To assist with task 2)

In relation to the plan in your own ongoing reference case study, provide a brief critical analysis (maximum 250 words) that presents the rationale for, and an evaluation of, its contingency plan.

Week 7: Essential reading

- Wilkinson, J. and Bowyer, S (2017). The impacts of abuse and neglect on children; and comparison of different placement options. Evidence review. Department for Education.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/602148/Childhood_neglect_and_abuse_comparing_placement_options.pdf

Choice of further reading to be guided by specific learning goals identified by the participant with their manager/supervisor.

- Baynes, P. (2015) *Contact: Making good decisions for children in public law*. Dartington: Research in Practice www.rip.org.uk/frontline
- Cottrell, S. (2005) *Critical Thinking Skills. Developing Effective Analysis and Argument*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Neil, E, Beek, M. and Ward, E. (2014) *The “Contact After Adoption” Study*. Available online at: <http://www.uea.ac.uk/contact-after-adoption/home>.
- Ruch, G., (2007) “Thoughtful” practice: child care social work and the role of case discussion *Child and Family Social Work* 12 370-379.
- BBC Radio 4 *The Adoption Podcast*
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05k3wsq/episodes/downloads>

Extra reading and work on contact

This work is not mandatory but it is an extra piece of work for those practitioners who want to build on their knowledge in relation to contact.

Ensuring contact is based on the needs of the child and is child focused.

An understanding of the purpose of having or terminating contact has to underlie all contact plans – why are we doing this? Who is it for? Contact in itself has no inherent value unless it serves one of these purposes FOR THE CHILD. It must be focused on the needs of the child but of course we must also consider the essential principal in the Children Act 1989 which is that we must work in partnership with parents.

However, this cannot override the central principal in the Children Act 1989 which is that the child's welfare is paramount in all our decision making. The tension between working in partnership with the parent but keeping the child at the heart of our practice is one that many practitioners struggle with. SCRs (Sidebottom 2016, Brandon 2014) have consistently shown how practitioners can focus too much on the needs of the adult, and the child therefore can become invisible - the rule of optimism (Dingwall 1993) whereby professionals has been defined as being the following:

'this is where a positive stance is taken of a child circumstances or level of risk, which is not necessarily supported by the objective evidence or information available' (Daniel Pelka SCR 2013).

On the other hand practitioners can become so focused on the child they do not make any effort to engage with the parents - this is an approach whereby the social worker will say 'I am only here for the child' (Featherstone 2014). This is also not an effective social worker and those practitioners who practice in this way are ignoring the key principal of the Children Act 1989 which stipulates that social workers should work in partnership with parents.

Returning to contact it is important that social workers recognise that contact provides a unique opportunity to **observe and intervene in parent-child relationships**, to gain knowledge that can underpin our plans. Contact can also play an essential role in building new relationships – e.g. when extended family members or absent fathers come forward to care for a child with whom they have had little contact and can keep important relationships alive.

Contact can provide reassurance for parents and children that the other is safe, well and continues to care about them, showing that they have not been forgotten. This can be essential in terms of ensuring we are meeting the child's emotional and psychological needs.

Furthermore, some parents are able to use contact to acknowledge the harm they have caused and say sorry to children, helping them to heal. It can be an opportunity to build up good memories together even if a return home is not possible. Children have the opportunity to ask questions about their history and the reasons for not living in care, understanding more about e.g: mental health or learning disability. This can help build the child's self-esteem and sense of identity and can play an important role in overcoming trauma. Contact can help children understand who they are and develop a sense of identity - particularly important if they are placed with carers from a different ethnicity/class/part of the country.

It is also important to note that contact can provide an important dose of reality, helping children to understand that their parents' difficulties were real, addressing fantasies about life at home and preparing them for the limitations and risks that birth family members might pose if they seek them out as adults.

Parents who accept a child's new family can help them to settle, reduce torn loyalties and help children see birth and permanent family as part of one extended family network – this works best when new parents are involved in contact. It can also help foster carers and adopters feel able to claim children and accept their history. Birth parents may feel more positive about placements when contact is good.

Hedy Cleaver's 2000 Study *Fostering Family Contact* emphasised the importance of ensuring that the aims of contact are realistic and underpinned with appropriate professional support. Hedy Cleaver's 2000 study *Fostering Family Contact* found that the purpose of contact was 'to improve relationships' in a significant number of cases, but that this was an unrealistic objective in the absence of therapeutic support. Poor relationships tended to remain poor.

Useful resource: <http://contact.rip.org.uk/>. This website supports practitioners working on making positive post-adoption contact plans and supporting birth relatives and adopters through contact planning for their child.