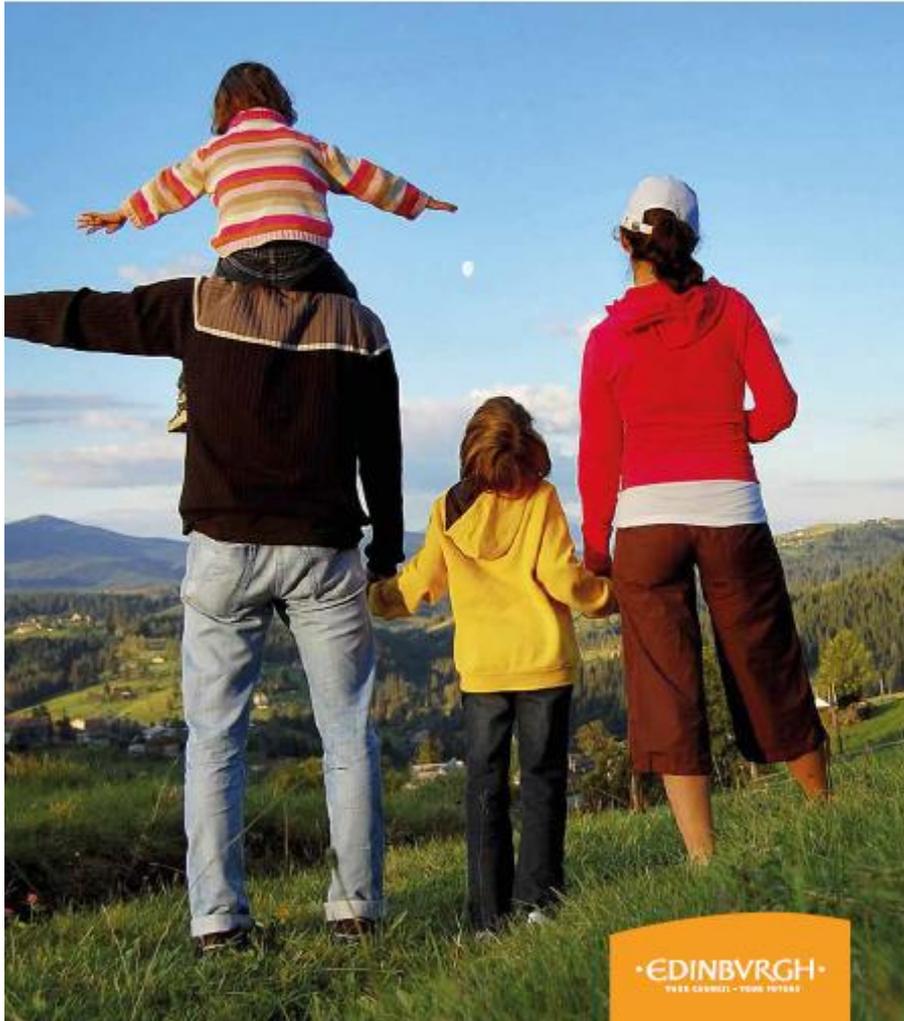


KEEPING IN TOUCH

Managing Contact for Looked After Children



IFSW Conference

8 September 2015

• EDINBURGH •
YOUR COUNCIL - YOUR FUTURE

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**Service Manager
Looked After and Accommodated Children
City of Edinburgh**

Keeping in Touch

Contact guidance

A framework for making recommendations on contact and includes sections on:



- Preparation and support of birth parents
- Support and managing contact
- Contact and Children's Hearings
- Kinship care
- Contact with siblings
- Assessing risks in contact

Contact guiding principles

- **The wellbeing and safety of the child**
The child's needs are the central consideration
- **Attachment-focused**
Provides context for all aspects of children's development
- **Evidence based**
Informed by current research, practice evidence and policy
- **Transparent**
Provides clarity on why particular recommendations are made

Making decisions about contact

- 1 The child's needs, age and stage of development
and
- 2 the purpose of contact
informs
- 3 the nature and frequency of contact



Safe contact

Key considerations

- The quality of contact for the child
- The level of risk which contact presents
- Whether contact would reawaken the trauma of abuse

The child's needs

Key considerations

- How contact contributes to the child's safety and wellbeing
- How contact meets both short and long term needs

The child's plan

Key considerations

- As the plan changes, contact arrangements will need to change
- Children's need for family knowledge will change over time
- Contact should support a strong attachment with a caring adult, not undermine it.

The Purpose of Contact in the context of Child's Plan

- **Initial Assessment:** Quality of relationships and parenting capacity
- **Rehabilitation:** Maintaining and building relationships and building on parenting capacity
- **Permanence:** Maintaining relationships and promoting a coherent story

Contact guidance content

1. Bringing theory and practice together
2. The legal framework for contact
3. Permanence planning
4. Support for birth parents
5. Supporting contact: age and stage
6. Supporting contact: key relationships
7. Supporting contact: particular needs
8. Supporting contact: children's circumstances
9. Young people in residential care

Preparing for Children's Hearings

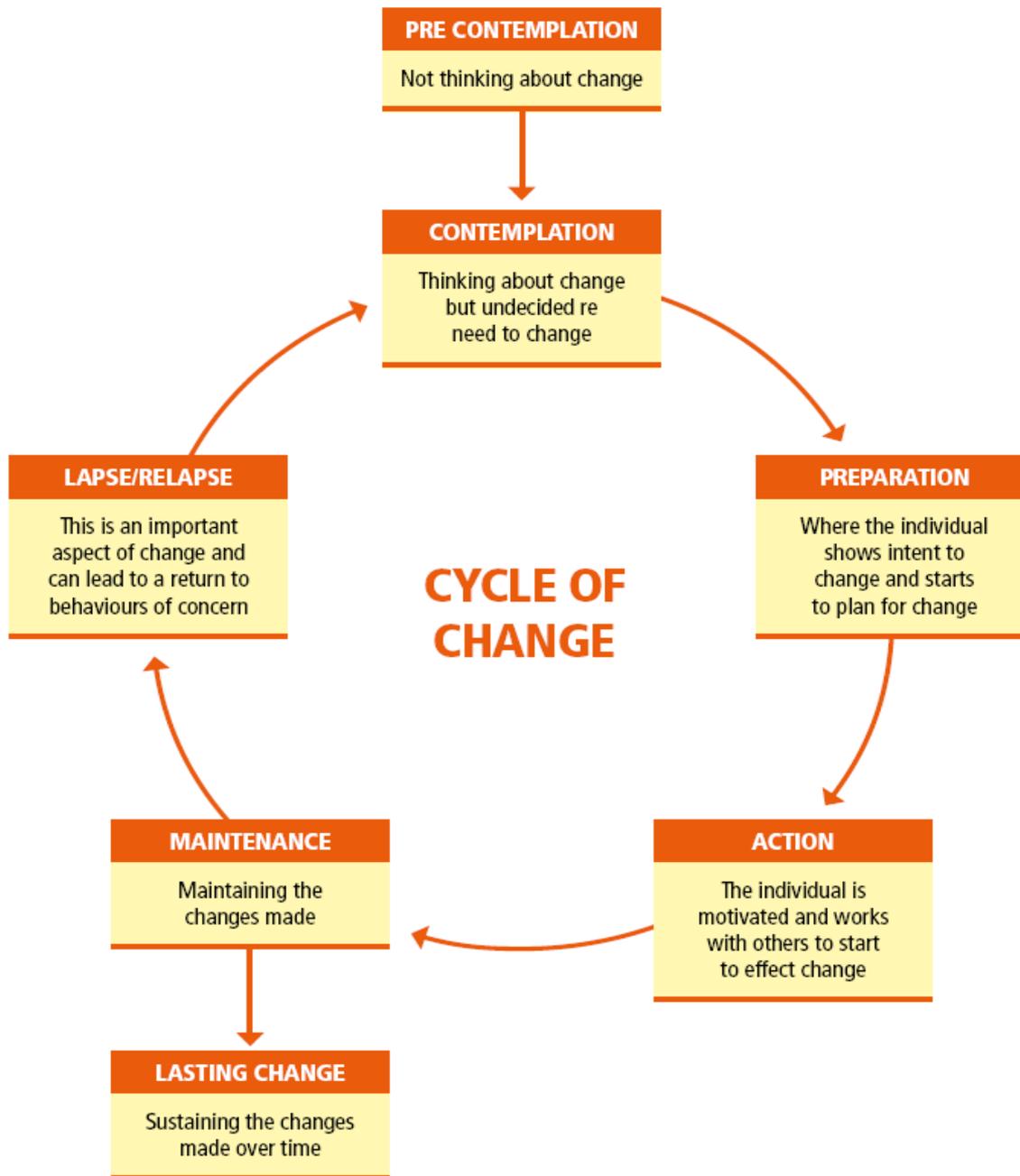
- Use ten key questions to prepare for a panel
- Show how contact meets the child's needs
- Show how contact is compatible with the child's plan

Permanence Planning

- Assessing contact on the basis of the child's needs and safety
- Taking the degree of parental change as the best indicator of possible, successful rehabilitation, not the frequency or nature of contact
- Planning for permanence is complex and advice should be obtained from legal services at an early stage
- Preparing for a permanence panel is a major piece of work

Preparing for a Permanence Panel

- A comprehensive chronology
- The views of the child about the plan, taking account of age and maturity
- The views and wishes of birth parents or other key figures
- Proposed legal route and plans for contact.



Support for birth parents

Some points to consider:

- When contact starts
- The child's safety
- Contact Agreements
- Venues
- Where parents can find support
- Assessing contact
- Supervising contact
- Reviewing contact

Observation checklist excerpt

Child's Name:	D.O.B. / Age:	Swift No:
Parent(s) Family Member(s) Name(s) if not parent, relationship to child:		
Primary Purpose(s) of contact e.g. Assessment of Parenting Capacity, Assessment and or Support for Rehabilitation, Permanence Contact, Maintaining Family Links:		
Venue:		Setting/Activity:
Date:		Time and Duration:
Name of Supervising Worker/Carer:		Designation:

PARENTAL SAFETY AND RELIABILITY

(Tick appropriate section. Examples of particular skills can be recorded on the sheet or in the Summary)

	Yes	No	Any other comment
On Time:			
Appeared to be Alcohol/Drug free:			
SKILL	NOT AT ALL Child/ Young Person: Needs much more of this from parent(s)	Some Evidence – OK for Child/Young Person: There could be more of this	Good Level of Skill – This was good for Child/Young Person:
Emotionally Regulated – Calm:			
Positive, Light, Playful Attitude:			
Greets Appropriately:			



Child development stages

AGE	NORMAL DEVELOPMENT	IMPACT OF SEPARATION AND LOSS
Birth to one year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rapid physical growth Language development Trust, confidence and attachment through routine consistent, responsive care giving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to thrive Passive, withdrawn Poor eye contact, demanding, disengaged
Toddlers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exploring, into everything, Taking charge, temper tantrums Enjoys play with other children, able to amuse self for periods May be toilet trained during the day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor coordination, fearful Uncontrollable anger Become clingy and regressive behaviours
Pre- school years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curious, questioning, sharing and cooperating Self-reliant in terms of dressing and toileting Enjoys imaginative play and magical thinking Enjoys playing with other children and able to share Using language to plan and understand their world 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor interactions with children adults Extreme clinginess or non reliance on adults, even when hurt Overreacts, constant activity, aggression, nightmares Express feelings of badness and blame for their circumstances
Around six years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good at starting, but may be unable to complete tasks without assistance Regress easily Respond to praise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of confidence in new situations. Becoming overwhelmed, preoccupied with loss. Unable to concentrate at school

Around seven years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Able to concentrate and may not like interruptions Work hard and play hard and don't like to make mistakes Act out their feelings rather than talk Pre-occupied with fairness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make take things that belong to others Regression and sense of sadness, guilt, depression and overwhelmed by things 'not being fair' Bossy with other children, Telling lies and aggression
Around eight years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selfish, Impatient, and prone to exaggerate Curious, interested in stories about themselves when younger Beginning to develop a sense of humour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficulties with self-identity Difficulties in understanding their emotions Fears and nightmares
Around nine years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Becoming more socially skilled, cooperative, responsible and independent. Like to plan ahead Work hard and play hard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need pictures and tools to help express feelings and stay connected to plans
Around ten years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While enjoying family activities, friends are becoming very important Like to be like their peers Greater confidence and ability to participate in discussions about problems and values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rapid changes from verbal challenging to thumb sucking in three seconds. Withdrawn, bossy Unable to make and keep friends
Around eleven years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Always in motion, emotionally unstable, huge appetite for everything Tire easily, but hate to go to bed or get up Fear of ghosts, snakes, wild animals Clothes matter, but don't look after them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emotionally unstable, irresolvable anger, lashing out with words and actions Poor ability to tolerate younger siblings Poor self care Fears and nightmares

Rights and views

- What is considered when planning contact?
- What are your rights
- Why isn't contact the same for everyone?
- How are decisions about contact made?

Contact guidance training

Training

- Feb-June 2015
- 11 training sessions:
 - 9 for practice teams,
 - 2 for carers and workers
- 222 attendees
- 38 foster carers
- 112 from practice teams
- Remainder from FBC, CAMHS, Sick Kids, Family Group Co-ordinators

Feedback

- **Foster carer** - I like the fact that the guidance brings structure to what can be a complex scenario. I also like the fact that the roles of all concerned are taken into account.
- **Team leader** - Very useful. Helped me reflect and think of future planning and preparation and support for all involved. The resources attached to the guidance are a great addition.
- **Team leader** - I found the training very clear – everyone has their part to play to help plans for children be as fair and without delay as possible.

Practice Team Feedback

- “An overwhelming positive acknowledgement and pleasure that guidance is in place”- SP
- Enthusiasm about the ‘contact wheel’ feeling it makes total sense for SW task
- Enthusiasm about the additional tools such as the contact agreement form and the supervising contact form; process is more streamlined, attachment focussed and allows supervisors to focus in on what we are looking for from parents during contact
- Very positive comments about the key messages in the DVD

Team working

- The City of Edinburgh Council
- Early years services and PrePare
- Childrens' Rights team
- Family based care
- Legal services
- Practice teams and review team
- Residential and Secure services
- SCRO, CELCIS, SG and CHS
- Mary McKenna, Edwina Grant, Sally Wassell and Lexy Plumtree

Staff Award for Forward Thinking



QUESTIONS?