Effective Permanence Planning seeks to provide children and young people with secure, stable relationships in family settings that demonstrate warmth and loving support through childhood and into early adulthood. This provides children and young people with a sense of security, continuity, commitment, identity and belonging that will anchor them as adults. Even where older children and young people may not wish, or not able to be, in fostering or adoptive families, there is a need to achieve placement stability and longevity which provides a similar sense of security, warmth and belonging.

The IRO has a central part to play in ensuring that a child or young person’s need for permanency is being met and the review, scrutiny and challenge role of the IRO is the core element of holding other parts of the service to children to account for the quality of services delivered.

By keeping the needs of the child or young person central to our planning the IRO can facilitate best practice on behalf of the child and the following checklist supports that effort from the earliest point of Tier 3 intervention.

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| Family solutions within the extended family/connected persons should always be the first avenue explored if a child or young person cannot or should not be cared for by their parent/carers. The IRO should raise this question from their first involvement. |  |
| If children or young people cannot be cared for by their parent/s/carers at this time, is there a plan for rehabilitation and what are the likely timescales for successful reunification? |  |
| Does the placement identified, whether with family, connected persons or foster carers have the potential to be a long-term home for the child, in the absence of rehabilitation to parental care? (If not, what are the benefits for the child in being placed and what are the alternatives being actively considered?) |  |
| The placement should offer emotional warmth, security and a sense of being owned and belonging for the child or young person-how is this evidenced? |  |
| The placement should offer long term stability and continuity of care. Are there any known barriers to achieving this and what are the expectations of the carer, the parent/s and the child/ young person in supporting this? |  |
| How have the wishes and feelings of the child, where they are of an age and understanding to provide them, been incorporated within the permanency planning. How have these been evidenced? |  |
| The placement should wherever possible support the child or young person’s identity in terms of ethnicity, language, religious belief and culture and always be able to respond to issues around sexuality and gender identity. How is this supported in the permanency plan and what steps need to be taken to provide additional supports in these areas where necessary? |  |
| Where there are siblings does the placement have the capacity to keep siblings together into the long-term? |  |
| Where it is appropriate the permanency planning considers the child or young person’s need to maintain contact with their parent/s/carers, siblings and other important people in their life. Will the placement actively support these arrangements? |  |
| Where a “forever family” is not available within the child or young person’s extended birth family; what Life Story work has begun to enable the child/young person to know and understand their family history and the reasons why they are being cared for outside of their birth family? |  |
| Does the permanency planning take account of the child or young person’s need for stability and consistency of education? How is this evidenced? |  |
| The young person has the option for Staying put and the carer/s are clear that the young person is a welcome part of their family beyond the age of eighteen. How is this evidenced? |  |
| For older children, will the placement provide support and assistance as the young person moves towards independence at a time of their choosing and what safeguards are in place to ensure this transition plan is safe and realistic? |  |

The IRO should review:

* The timeliness of decision-making and highlight the need to prevent any drift in achieving permanence.
* That parallel planning, including concurrent planning in adoption scenarios, is actively considered as part of early permanency planning.
* Permanency planning begins at earlier stages of the child’s journey but following accommodation a comprehensive Permanence Plan must be available by the 2nd LAC Review at four months. The IRO should record this in the minutes. If a Permanency Plan is not available to the 2nd Review this should form the basis for an immediate Escalation, with a tight timescale for completion.
* Children and young people’s situations change over time and the Permanency Plan should be regularly reviewed and new Plans made to meet the assessed needs of the child or young person and the placements continued ability to meet them.