# Transcript: CELCIS BLOG – Agents of Change – Jo Derek

My name is Jo Derek, Managing Director, foster care associates, Scotland. Our data had shown us that it can take between three to five years for someone who might have been interested in fostering to actually get to the stage of really wanting to take that forward. So, in utilising that information, we were expecting that we would be able to recruit carers who were interested in offering short term placements for young people. Actually, what we found in terms of turning evidence into practice, was that anecdotally, we were speaking with potential foster carers. And when we were talking to them about the needs of young people, one of the strong messages that we were getting back was, actually I'm not sure if I could see them moving on, but like them to be able to stay as part of our family. And so we took that information, we coupled it with data that we've been receiving from local authorities that we'd be meeting with as part of our monitoring meetings with them. And they were identifying that they had a number of young people or children who a permanence order had been granted for and part of the child's plan was to move for permanence. And as a result of that, we actually developed a new service offering for families, which was about recruiting foster carers from the outset, who were approved for permanence, and that we would then be able to take their profile to a local authority, and that we would then be able to look at matching for a young person where permanence had already been identified.

That's quite different from where we started 15 years ago. We started as an organisation, and we were receiving referrals for children and young people on a same day placement. When prospective foster carers were talking to us about the needs of children and young people, and when they were saying, oh actually I'm not sure if I could give them back, it was very much around, we were using qualitative data there because it was very much about coming from an emotional perspective. And it was that drive for making a difference in the lives of children and young people. But recognising that a return home for a child would be very difficult for them and for their families. And often, the data that we were receiving anecdotally from prospective foster carers was about the emotional impact on them, but also the emotional impact on their own families, particularly if they had children of their own or if they had close relatives such as nieces and nephews. So there was another layer that the data was sharing with us about the importance of the wider network as part of the fostering family. And so again, in recognition of that, when we have been undertaking our recruitment and our preparatory training for our foster carers, we will ask and invite one of our current foster carers to be a part of that process, because it is then helping to inform those that are interested in fostering and to be able to make some decisions really quite early on about whether or not fostering is right for them.

What we have experienced is, anecdotally again, we've had foster carers who have said, you know, actually this is one of the hardest things that we've done. But actually, it's also one of the best things that we've done. And people talk about, isn't this a great thing that's happened for these young people? And I certainly know of a couple who said actually, we are the lucky ones.