

Visualising the difference

Transcript

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I'm David McQueen, I'm one of the team leaders within children's social work services for Shetland Islands Council. We started the process in 2016. And I think we had recorded the necessary data. But looking at beyond that opened our eyes to some of the things I think that we assumed was happening in terms of drift and delay, confirming some of the ideas, but it also maybe opened our eyes to some of the things that we weren't aware of in terms of children, and moving forward interventions support and how we can be better and outcomes for kids.

What we've changed is our procedures, policies, timelines around how we need to ensure that permanence, for example, is part of our conversations from day one, I don't think people were aware of the drift and delay. And so that's raised a huge awareness, which in turn then helps people in terms of their report writing, their evidence based recordings and the intervention, and their planning for the future for kids. We took the data – we are a small authority, so we were able to identify particular cases. That made it real, so the data wasn't just figures, it was around real people, real children, real families. And from that, I think it opened people's eyes to see what improvements we could make for these kids, for their families and help them to understand actually, the time gaps. And it raised an awareness around what impact that has - not just on the here and now, but for the future for children, young people.

The other bit that we used, the data to show us was the impact and the purpose of contact for families and for children. And was that good? And why was it there? And how long was it going without actually being reviewed or looked at? We looked at pie charts, we looked at run charts, we looked at whatever graphs, and the hardest bit was to see that previously, before we started this process, how long kids had waited, because you could actually visually see it. And from the process, we're able to know visually see the difference in the gaps narrowing and the timelines changing for some of these children and young people. The types of cases that we've seen, is where our rehabilitation plans for back home have been certainly a lot smarter. And that's helped children understand what's happening. It has helped families know precisely what they need to do in order for kids to be back home with them. And that's really good that's specific for them. Where

that's not been possible, we've seen children, young people in more permanent places, and they've just grown and flourished and developed. You know, it's not just about providing a permanent home, it's about the whole lifestyle changing the whole opportunities, their well being. So we've seen huge difference in one or two families, children, young people with that.

It has stemmed from learning to use data. Yes, data was out there in the ether for us. It's now part of everyday working for us. From a management point of view. It's about us having an overview of that and actually clear evidential things that we can base our planning on. I think the other bit that we've used the data for is to be more clear in our recordings, and therefore that helps in terms of young people and not leaving them in positions which is maybe damaging to them.

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