

CELCIS REACH: David Woodier| How the Education Forum helps a teacher see the bigger picture

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The CELCIS Education Forum is there to support teachers, and David Woodier talks about how the Forum has helped him in his role. David is a teacher in North Lanarkshire who works as part of their Inclusion Base which supports looked after children in schools.

I first came to the education forum probably about seven years ago and I was fairly new to this kind of work and it helped me understand a lot more about the kind of bigger picture of what was going on in Scotland around looked after children and the kind of legal side of what the Scottish Government wanted to achieve. It gave me a good sense of what was good practice across different local authorities and that was quite eye-opening. In that sense it's a great place to network, but it's networking with a clear purpose, talking about how we're approaching problems that are probably similar across Scotland in different local authorities and how people are solving those problems, how we're making progress with looked after children in education.

So, I'm a teacher and I work from what's called the Inclusion Base in North Lanarkshire and I'm on a particular team in that base which is a team of teachers who support the inclusion of looked after children in mainstream schools and so we're peripatetic. We go to different schools, we work with children, we work with teachers, head teachers, really just trying to promote good outcomes for looked after children in school. It's very individualized, so I work with children of different ages so it could be a very young person in primary school, it could be a young person who's about to leave high school and I'm helping with the transition to college. Sometimes that work with a young person takes place over a number of years a lot of the work is around helping children transition from primary to high school because that's a vulnerable time for young people.

It's about establishing a relationship quite often with the teacher and listening to the teacher, observing the child, thinking about why the child is acting a certain way and maybe then thinking about how to approach a young person. Quite a lot of the support is more relational support, it

recognizes that looked after children have had a traumatic history. I worked with a little boy in p6 and I think the school initially made a request when he was in p1 or p2. So, I've been working with him probably for four years and I remember when I first met him, he was very distressed, very anxious, wouldn't engage in reading or learning in maths. He would throw a temper tantrum and gradually over the years the relationship and trust he's built up in his teachers has really kind of opened him up to learn where he's not so anxious he's not so resistant to learning, to trying new things. He's more willing to take a risk in a good sense and he's still probably going to struggle a bit in high school, but there's no question now about whether he can manage or cope with a mainstream high school. And to me that success. If a child is able to go to a mainstream high school and cope pretty well, I'm pleased, that's good.

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