

CELCIS REACH: Lynne Shettleton | Aberdeenshire halve the size of reports they write for looked after children

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Lynne Shuttleton is one of two team leaders in the Fraserburgh children and families team in Aberdeenshire Council, where she and her staff have halved the size of reports they have to write at the point of options appraisal. The team worked in partnership with the CELCIS Permanence and Care Excellence programme (PACE) and the Scottish Government, and hear Lynne tells of the process to streamline necessary assessments.

The streamlined assessment is one of the tests that we've been trying out in Aberdeenshire and when we were looking at where drift and delay really happened, a lot of it came from the workers' sense of the assessments that they had to complete and the multitude of assessments that they had to complete. So, when you're going to an options appraisal you were bringing your parenting assessment, your options appraisal, your contact assessment, your sibling assessment. These were all separate standalone documents that, in essence, became war and peace for the workers to write. So, it was changing some of the workers' thinking as well and that whole culture that once a child is accommodated, you suddenly are asked or tasked with writing a parenting assessment and it was trying to get people to realize that no you're not tasked with writing a parenting assessment. You've done that you've assessed that this child can no longer stay at home and that's the evidence that you've had for the child being accommodated. Now what you're tasked with doing is assessing the parents' capacity to make those necessary changes for that child to either be rehabilitated to home or for other permanence plans to be made and taking parents alongside you on that journey as part of that capacity assessment. So, it has been really difficult to get people to start thinking like that. Although I haven't been instrumental in designing the streamlined assessment, what I did within my team is I asked a couple of the workers whether they would try it out, which they did. It's taken a lot of jiggery pokery to get to where we want it to be, but I think we've taken three assessments now to options appraisal and the feedback, both from Legal- because we took it to Legal first to say is this enough? Is this enough evidence? Because essentially

what we have now is, instead of having 50 to 60 pages of various documents, we now have a document that's streamlined into about 30 pages. So, the feedback from Legal, the feedback from the review managers, have been very positive. What they've said is that it actually reads very well, that it's not just streamlined but flows very well and the story of the child is told very well through that one document.

I think it will help speed up the process in that, coming to options appraisal, some of the drift and delay was that these assessments all hadn't been completed because people felt there was so much work to undertake and it was almost like they were starting again to undertake something new, whereas they've done the build of the work and it was building on what they have. And often reviews would be delayed or asked to be continued because all those documents weren't being produced. What I've always said is that - or people felt that they had to have certain things there, but it's the right documents that need to be there, it's not you have to do this just because that's what we do. It's you have that work there so it's about producing just what they need to.

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