

CELCIS REACH: Scott McCallum| Midlothian is ready for PACE

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Scott McCallum of Midlothian Council explains the improvements they've made in their permanence processes to get ready for the Permanence and Care Excellence (PACE) programme starting. He explains what has inspired him from other local authorities and what he hopes PACE will bring to the lives of looked after children in Midlothian.

Midlothian Council has prioritised permanency over the last three or four years. Previously child protection dominated the agenda in Midlothian Council, however more recently we have focused on children in care and on improving the planning and the quality of care provided to children the care system.

What we've noticed in the last year to 18 months is that getting decisions for children who are in the care system who require to be moved on to permanent substitute homes, we are achieving that on a quicker time scale. The average, if you go back four or five years, was perhaps 18 months before a permanence decision was made. More recently we've got that down to ten, eleven months. I think the research would tell you that in early decision making for children in the care system, long term it improves outcomes across the board.

What we're looking for PACE to do and to support us with, is to better analyse and better apply the information in the data that we gather. We feel that we're further down the journey than other authorities that signed up with PACE at the start of the program, but again it's about refining and improving on what we do currently and using that data more productively.

I've been interested in what other local authorities are doing in terms of small tests of change. The one in particular that I've been keen to find out a bit more about was the Aberdeen City taking the form E out of the out of the process. That is something that I think we're going to prepare to consider in Midlothian Council so I've heard a bit more about that the over the course of today. I've also been interested in what East Renfrewshire have been doing in terms of presenting pictorial chronologies to children's hearings and a timeline. That is actually quite powerful information.

