

CELCIS REACH: Calum Swanson | PACE is a real eye opener for Orkney Panel Member

Issue 8 | Autumn 2016

In this video Calum Swanson, a member of the Children's Panel in Orkney, tells us about the difference the Permanence and Care Excellence (PACE) programme has made to him and the Panel. He now appreciates the huge number of processes involved from when a child becomes looked after until they reach their permanent place to stay.

We took on the PACE thing about a year ago in Orkney and I went along because I was available as a panel member. I went to the initial meeting, which was an eye-opener, a huge eye-opener about all the processes that were involved and it was really interesting. So, when the initial training had been done in Orkney, the PACE champions group was formed so I went on that as the panel representative.

What I learned from the initial PACE group and being on the PACE champions group is a huge amount of processes that are involved from start to finish from when a child first becomes looked after to permanence. The children's panel plays a small part in that - it plays a very important part, one of the decision makers for it. It was just very interesting to find out how everything else came together. I'd never heard before of all these processes - LAC reviews - all the acronyms were just like a different language to start with. It filled a huge table of all the parts and the processes involved so you could see where there could be improvements made.

We've been doing PACE in Orkney for about a year now and it's been rolled out now to more social workers and the foster adoption panel and various people like that now in Orkney. The multi-agency part has been very good. Panel members talk with social workers now and there's a change of a atmosphere, there's more collaboration. We can understand other people's thoughts and we understand other people's jobs better - what they're doing why they do things.

As a panel member, even just the word permanence has made a difference. We know that when we're looking at panel the papers before a hearing that if permanence isn't mentioned we're still thinking about it we're looking at it we're questioning what's going to be the long term future, how long's this process going to take? So panel members are

much more aware now of permanence, the drift the delay, and that things need to be done to change it. There is a sense of urgency, yes, to not delay our decisions, ask for more information to enable us to make decisions better, decisions quicker.

We have a target of 80 percent of looked after children in Orkney to have achieved permanence within 12 months. And with us having a lot smaller numbers, we should be able to see a significant difference very quickly and be able to identify that difference and identify that child as having an improvement because of what we've done. We'd like to achieve the 80 percent of children at least get through the permanence process within 12 months. Nobody's achieving that at the moment.

We're still quite early into the process of getting it to panel members. January is our next panel meeting when PACE is going to be discussed. That's when we'll be doing a big push - all the PACE champions will be there and we'll really sell it to panel members as well. Panel members will respond well. There might be some who have an initial a fear of the word permanence. I think everybody has a fear of the word permanence. I'll be getting them over that initial fear and help them to engage with it and understand what it means.

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