# CELCIS blog – A decade of Data, by John Muir

I'm Emily Valente, I am senior manager for children and families and criminal justice in Stirling Council. And I also fulfil the role of Chief Social Work officer. The data analysis was extremely important and extremely valuable in the work that we're doing here in Stirling. What it revealed is there were a relatively high number of young people in placements that were residentially focused out of area. We know from the research that that can have particular difficulties in terms of returning children home because they've been removed from the locality and estranged from their families. It can lead to a sense of alienation – that you don't belong anywhere. The analysis helped us look at the scale and the volume of that, which was higher than we would have liked. So what we did was we set up a system to review all of those cases. Managers within the service met with myself and talked about those cases and gave us the detail of it. And then we looked at whether there was any feasibility at all of any of those young people being able to return to their locality. There were 39, young people and total that we discussed round the table. Out of that exercise, we were able to return 11 of those young people back into their communities, either in their home with their family, or in a more localized-based foster care in a family setting. The data analysis was extremely powerful and helpful to us. There was one particular child who stuck out for me, and who I lost sleep over. And I think that I was not alone in that. I think all the managers in the room were very impacted by the circumstances of this young boy. His background was particularly traumatic. What we discovered was that the young person had been placed in residential care at a very young age - five years of age - which is unusual. But they had remained there for a long period of time, six or seven years. So, we knew that it was not going to be easy to return that young person back. But we decided that, having looked at all the details of the case and spoken to the social worker and the psychologist and all the workers concerned that if we had a family, who was equipped to meet the needs of that young person, then there was a good possibility that this was going to work. We knew that one of her local foster carers who didn't have specific skills probably would not be able to manage the needs of this young person. This young person with the learning disability, and had obviously, because of the fact that they had been in this residential establishment for a long time, was institutionalised. So we recruited enhanced foster carers for this young person. And those foster carers… It's actually a social worker, who left the job to look after this young person - totally committed, a fabulous resource. And we got our education colleagues on board, made sure that we had strong educational provision for that young person because that was really important. So that was all planned. And the young person transitioned into a local area. And the good news is that it appears to be successful at this point in time. They had a special place in everyone's house. I suppose that we all then became galvanised into making sure that we, if nothing else, did something to improve the life chances of this young person. So, it takes us right back to the data analysis. We wouldn't be where we are today if we hadn't done that, and there is no question of doubt. We would never have got such a brilliant resource in terms of this foster carer for this young person. It just wouldn't have happened.

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