



Re-evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Foster Care Associates: Alnwick

For the purpose of this re-evaluation I had the pleasure of meeting with Aidan, Stephen, Ben, Josh, Emma, Deborah, Phil and Clarkey who are members of the young people's forum. The young people's forum continues to be central to the process of dialogue with Foster Care Associates (FCA) Alnwick office and the organisation as a whole.

This report will highlight and identify the positive partnership that exists between the children, young people and staff to bring about changes within FCA Alnwick. The children and young people hold meetings and have a suggestion box in order to gather views that other children and young people want discussed and changes made.

It is clear from my visits that children and young people play an active role and are encouraged to put forward their views, opinions and concerns to make changes to the service they receive.

Evidence of dialogue and change

I asked the youth forum to explain to me what changes they have made within FCA Alnwick since the last time they met with Investing in Children.

The young people's forum continues to meet on a regular basis every two to three months. The group gives the children and young people an opportunity to meet together and have their say about the services FCA Alnwick provides. FCA is committed to listening to the comments made by the young people and regularly provides feedback on changes made.

The young people had allocated time during their meeting to speak with me. However before this they included me in a discussion they were having with Vicky Conway the manager of the Alnwick office. The young people were giving their views on long term fostering in order to inform both local and national policy. Aidan informed me **"The most important thing about my foster family is that they are always there for me. In the past I didn't like some of the families I was placed with. But if I don't like them I just tell my support worker at FCA and they help me change families until I am happy."**

One issue that the young people have been addressing is why birth children are allowed mobile phones but the fostered children are not. **"We looked at why this was the case."** Ben informed me **"I wanted a mobile for ages but my social worker said no loads. We talked about it in this group and with Sean (support worker) and things changed because I eventually got one."** Phil added **"I don't see why birth children should get anything different from the foster kids; FCA doesn't really let that happen. They have us all together, the carers have training with both fostered and birth kids and learn from everyone it's the best way."**

I asked the group if they felt that Foster Care Associates provided them with the opportunity to express their views and opinions. Emma informed me **"they do listen to us about everything, they do things with us that we like."**

The group had a discussion about how their views are listened to when they meet with their birth families. **“I think that this is when I get to have most say on what I want, we work with our support worker and decide where we feel comfortable meeting them. It’s called contact; it’s up to us when and where, which is how I like it. Other foster places just make you go but here they make the contact about you.”**

FCA provides an extensive range of activities for the children and young people who are part of the association. The activities are planned through the Young Peoples Forum. Josh informed **“Any activity that we do is always decided by the young people. It’s just right; we are the ones who do the activity.”**

The activities provided by FCS are planned by the young people with a great deal of thought and consideration. Clarkey told me that **“FCA is much better than other places because they treat you fairly. They don’t treat you like rubbish, they treat you like a human being and they respect you.”**

All the young people I met with were very positive about Foster Care Associates Alnwick office. They feel that they have the opportunity to participate in the direction of FCA and also take any issues to National boards and challenge peoples views and perceptions of Foster Care.

The young people involved in this report agree with the content. Therefore it is on their behalf that I have no hesitation in recommending at FCA Alnwick continues to be an investing in Children member.

I would like to finish this report by saying well done to all involved with FCA Alnwick and end with a quote from Phil

“Its all about communication, they talk to us, we talk to them. Things then happen; they listen to us about everything.”

**Kim Kyle
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Investing in Children
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