



Re-evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Foster Care Associates – South Office

For the purpose of this re-evaluation I had the pleasure of meeting with Jai, Adam, Mark and Ian 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) South office.

It was highlighted in the previous membership report that 'provision must be made for those children and young people who are not happy and not settled.'

This report will highlight and identify the positive partnership that exists between the children, young people and staff to bring about changes within FCA South. The children and young people hold meetings, have a graffiti wall and suggestion box in order to gather views that other children and young people want discussed and changes made. Jai informed me **"We have the My Space board, Graffiti wall and suggestion wall so we know what other people think about FCA because we don't always see each other; we then talk about all the different things at the youth forum meetings and put answers back on the graffiti wall."**

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 South since the last time they met with Investing in Children.

The FCA south office provides the children and young people who access their service numerous forms of support including; individual support, group support, activities, family support for both birth and foster children. The support staff also liaise with the children and young people and the numerous organisations they come into contact with. Mark informed me that he appreciated this flexibility when it comes to the support he receives. **"They listen to me about anything that I need to talk about; they give me advice on loads of different things such as college. They give the advice but I like that they let me make the decisions and they are just there to support me through things."** Adam added that his support worker discussed how he worked with Adam and informed him that if Adam ever wanted him to change the way they worked together he needed to discuss his concerns and they would find new ways of working. **"I was being supported with my new foster carers by going to a group session but I wanted help with my homework and I also wanted some time by myself with my support worker. This now happens from talking to him, we meet every Tuesday. I have been with loads of agencies and FCA is the only one that has really listened to what I want."**

Foster Care Associates South Office provides an extensive range of activities for the children, young people and their families. All of the activities are planned via the young

people's forum. The activities are planned by the children and young people with a great deal of thought and consideration. Jai informed me **“It's great that we get to plan the activities because it's us that go on them, we don't just plan our office, and we plan activities for all the young people from all the offices. That's something that has changed this year. It's good that we do that because we meet new people.”**

The young people's forum was keen to point out that they are also involved in bringing about change on a national level. The group recently took a trip to Leeds and spoke with ministers about the Leaving Care White Paper, some of the members of the forum are part of a group who meet and discuss what they think should go into such documents as a direct result of their experiences. **“If it was not for FCA wanting my views about how they work I would never have had the confidence that I had to stand up in front of the whole conference and give my opinions like I did.”** The young people have been invited back to continue their discussions and develop the paper further.

All the young people I met with were very positive about Foster Care Associates South Office. They feel that they have the opportunity to participate in the direction of Foster Care Associates on a local, regional and national level. They are also extremely passionate about taking any issues they wish to discuss to national boards and challenge peoples views and perceptions of Foster Care.

FCA has continued to develop and increase the opportunities for children and young people to stay active members of the association, and participate in different activities and discussions that are important to them. Some of the changes that have occurred over the last year are a direct result of the positive relationship the children and young people have with the staff. FCA gives children and young people the opportunity to shape the development of the association through the independent thoughts of the young people and giving them the freedom to discuss issues between one another. The young people involved in this report agree with the content, for these reasons I would recommend that FCA South continues to have Investing in Children membership.

Kim Kyle
Investing in Children
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