



## Re-evaluation for Investing in Children membership

### Foster Care Solutions

For the purpose of this re-evaluation I had the pleasure of meeting with Jamie, Tash, Bradley, Stacey, Ali, Shammeela and Kay. The young people are all actively involved in the development of Foster Care Solutions. Children and young people continue to be central to the process of dialogue within the association.

This report will highlight and identify the positive partnership that exists between the children and staff at Foster Care Solutions. The agency continues to grow and change. Although the agency is expanding it continues to provide opportunities for dialogue to occur between children, young people and staff.

Foster Care Solutions (FCS) aim to seek to consult with children and young people about the service provided. To listen and hear the voices of children and young people with regard to their hopes, aspirations and fears.

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.**

##### Young Peoples Forum

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 FCS and the Local Authority provide. FCS is committed to listening to the comments made by the young people and regularly provides feedback on changes made.

The young people discussed that they were unaware of their rights in relation to a number of areas. A social worker not linked to FCS came and answered questions that the children wanted answers to. It became apparent that Local Authorities operated differently with regards to what looked after children could and could not do. The young people feel that this is very unfair and are currently challenging the policies and procedures both within FCS and the Local Authority.

Stacey informed me that she was unhappy with the level of support that she was receiving and felt that because she was a birth child her support was not as good as the looked after children. **“I took my problem and spoke about it with the other young people. We spoke about the help that birth kids receive. We worked with Tracey and things changed; I now get a lot more support whenever I need it.”**

## Birth Children

Since their last evaluation for membership Foster Care Solutions has concentrated on developing its work with birth children. The association has set up files for each birth child. This is a direct response to requests from children who wanted access to trips, support and discussion groups.

Tracey visits the Birth Children in their homes every two months to ensure a high level of support. The young people wanted to meet with their support worker out of the home. This change in service delivery allows for the FCS team to challenge the marginalisation often faced by birth children. Tash informed me; **“During my last review meeting Stacey was asked to leave the room, I wanted her to stay. I think it’s good that we can say what we want to the social worker and they actually listen to what I want.”**

A life story workbook is used by the support worker. The children and young people complete the book, which is all about them. This is used as a tool which support workers use to develop any issues that they need to be addressed. **“If I am not happy I write it down and talk about it with Tracey. She helps me sort out the problem. In the past foster kids have received more than the birth children. Now that we have spoken about it with the workers we get a lot more support.”**

Shammeela added; **“FCS is now more involved with birth children, they have improved so much. I feel more respected. It’s important to respect the children and I think that is a change.”**

## Activities and Support Groups

Foster care Solutions provide 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. Jamie informed **“I have been with FCS the longest. 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 young people I spoke with were keen to highlight a recent development that has led to the activity programme being changed this year. Kay highlighted these changes she told me **“We asked to do activities in different age groups. We also wanted to join together both the Looked after Children and the Birth Children. We now have the TOFT group (Time out for Teenagers) and a group for the younger ones.”** Natasha added **“I am really pleased that they changed this. The activities are much better now; I don’t get bored any more watching the little kids.”**

The activities provided by FCS are planned by the young people with a great deal of thought and consideration. Bradley told me that FCS **“are more organised than other foster agencies and they have more time for you and more things to keep you busy.”**

Kay was keen to point out **“at the start of the year there were not many activities happening. We said that we wanted more activities and now we have. We can take part in loads of stuff.”**

## Young Persons Newsletter

Natasha brought me up to date with the developments of the Young Persons Newsletter. Natasha has recently taken over the production of the newsletter and is starting to work on the next issue. When Natasha was informing me of her role the other young people said

that they would also like to work on the newsletter and have asked me to recommend that a newsletter group is set up so they can all work on it together.

All of the children and young people I spoke to were happy with the service that Foster Care Solutions offers. However, they would like to work on a few changes which they recommend that they work on with the staff over the next year.

- **“When you first come into Foster care Solutions you are given an Introduction pack by the team. The young people feel that the leaflets are boring and would like to improve them with information that they feel is more relevant to young people.”**
- **“We would like to be more involved in producing the web site. It is being produced by staff but we are what make FCS. We would like the opportunity to chat to each other. It is us that count. We want our own section that we can make ours. To upload images, swap stories and just keep in touch.”**
- **“We would like to take part in the training that our parents do to become Foster Carers and all the drug training and stuff because we need to deal with all the issues that come with fostering.”**

All the young people I met with were very positive about Foster Care Solutions. They feel that they have the opportunity to participate in the direction of Foster care Solutions 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 and recommendations made. Therefore it is on their behalf that I have no hesitation in recommending at FCS continues to be an investing in Children member.

I would like to finish this report by saying well done to all involved with Foster Care Solutions and end with a quote from Jamie who has proudly been involved with the association longer than any other young person.

**“FCS is really good; it’s so small that we all know each other it’s the best. I get the chance to speak about my feelings.”**

**Kim Kyle  
Investing in Children  
February 2008**