



Re-evaluation for Investing in Children Membership
Foster Care Associates: Alnwick.

*“Foster Care Associates (FCA) is a national organisation providing high quality family placements to children and young people at a local level.
We want to provide the opportunity for those children ‘looked after’ to achieve their full potential and to live fulfilling lives in the community”*

<http://www.thefca.co.uk/>

FCA has over 50 offices however this re-evaluation is for the Alnwick base.

For the purpose of this report, I made two visits to FCA. At the first visit, I met with: Phil, Steven, Ben, Paul, Deborah and Emma. All of these young people were members of the youth forum and they were all being paid for their time because they were giving up part of their school holidays to be here. They also received a certificate for coming along to the forum.

Evidence of dialogue with children and young people:

- The sessions have been changed because the young people felt that previously they had been too long so they now do more activities in a shorter time.
- During the meeting, the young people came up with the following as what they would like to do over the next year, as part of the forum: a trip to RAF Bulmer to see the air and sea helicopter, sessions for Wet n Wild for during the summer holidays and football/trampoline sessions.
- Some members of the group have taken part in carer holidays. This is where FCA book and subsidise a holiday. This year the children and young people have the option of either going to Flamingo Land or Raby Hall in a caravan. During the holiday, the staff make up a programme of activities based on what the young people have told them they would like to do.
- Some members of the group have been involved in outreach sessions where they do things with a worker such as: getting their nails done, go swimming, visit museums and lucky girl had even been to see Westlife.
- FCA organise an annual conference, which some of the older young people in the group had been part of. The conference this year is held at Centre Parks.

Last year they had a big brother style chair and diary room as a way of getting the children and young people’s views of the service.

There are a number of workshops for the children and young people to take part in, and the young people themselves get to choose which one they go too.

- As a result of Every Child Matters, the group decided that they would like to do some First Aid Training. Quite a lot of people had said that they had done it at school but forgot a lot of it, so they wanted to do it again. This

was something that was clearly very popular and everyone seemed to get something out of it.

- We went ice skating and really enjoyed it – except Luke pushed Stacey over!!
- Later in the afternoon, after I had left, the children and young people were going to be taking part in the “Give Us a Hand” session. This is basically where all the young people are given a hand each and they have to write on something that they would improve about the service. The worker who I was with, said that it was a popular way of finding out the children and young people’s views.

The second time I visited FCA was the girl’s session where they were getting their nails and make up done. I met with: Stacey, Sammy, Rebecca, Emma, Jessica, Emma and Deborah. For some of the girls, it was their first time at FCA so they found it hard to comment on recommendations however they still told me their first impressions and future activities that they would like to be involved with.

Comments made by the children and young people:

“I think its great coming here. I’m down with Durham Social Services and they do nothing with me so it’s great coming here and doing different activities”

“I feel like I’m really listened too here. We are always getting letters and leaflets about how to complain if we aren’t happy with this service, but no one ever complains because it’s so good!”

“Its mint here”

“Everything’s great here!”

Recommendations by the children and young people:

- Have young people involved in delivering the workshops at the annual conference – as mentioned by Phil.
- To get together as a forum more often because they enjoy each others company
- To go swimming again
- Do some of the activities that we done last year, again.
- To go horse riding.

The children and young people involved in this report have agreed the content. FCA has had another successful year of dialogue with the children and young people that use their service and I would recommend them for Investing in Children membership for another year.

Ashleigh Greathead
Investing in Children
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