

Case Study FP2



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Case Study (Theresa) –Just get to 16 – Not if it works!

T, who is the subject of a Care Order, was placed with Families@FamilyCare Ltd 'X' years ago. She was at that time 15 years and 4 months old. At the time of her placement she was described in her Social Workers report as having "an issue with adhering to boundaries.....refusing to do what she is told.....staying out late, being verbally abusive, insolent and defiant."

She was said to "..have no respect for her family" with whom she argued a lot and that this was then the source of further arguments as they retaliated. She had been "..in trouble with the police for assaulting a girl from school - from which she was subsequently excluded. She was noted to "drink and smoke....when she goes out on weekends with her (significantly older) boyfriend" and had come close to being placed on an ASBO because of a drunken episode with him in a local park. At the risk of demonising the child for the purposes of a case study, I will add only one further comment from the Social Workers report. "Her previous carers have all indicated that T will not listen to anyone and will do what T wants. She will never adhere to any boundaries." She was not involved in any legitimate leisure activities and her life appeared to revolve about her boyfriend and activities more suited to a considerably older young person.

At the time of her placement, the Care Plan prepared by the Local Authority stated that a placement was required until T was 16 years of age (May 2009) at which point she had insisted that she would leave to live independently. It was hoped that she could engage in her education and the carers were to ensure that she travelled to and from school (approximately 12 miles away). She was also 'restricted' to contact with her family and friends on two evenings per week with her family - it was hoped but, on the basis of her history not expected, that she would adhere to this arrangement which was to be facilitated by the foster carers and Families@FamilyCare Ltd.

In concert with the placing Local Authority, the foster carers and Families@FamilyCare Ltd personnel accepted that this placement would be a challenge. T was clearly a young woman who had demonstrated that she would 'take her own way' regardless of the views of others and at times with a degree of recklessness in relation to her own safety and well being. She was also a potentially capable young woman who had a determination and tenacity that encouraged in the right direction might become a strength rather than a source of frustration to both T and those seeking to help or support her.

Rather than try to impose (as she might have seen it) rules and boundaries on J the foster carers with the support of T's Social Worker and Families@FamilyCare Ltd personnel sought to negotiate with her, offering explanations for their concerns for her well-being as part of the reason why, for example, she would be taken to visit friends - including her boyfriend - and collected later! They explained that her education was her choice but pointed out the disadvantages if she opted for the non-engagement route. They said that they would respect her need for private time if she, like the two teenage members of the foster family, reciprocated by being involved in family activities including meals and trips out together. Whilst not wishing to over simplify or minimise the remarkable work undertaken by the foster family it is clear that T responded well to being given high level explanations and a degree of choice.

T's first review at the foster home was an unequivocal success. It noted just how well T had done - she had fully engaged with the family who had also made her birth family an integral part of an autumnal barbeque celebration at their home, an enjoyable experience repeated on her 16th

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Birthday. There had been no issues at all about her maintaining agreed boundaries and she had embraced a number of the leisure activities that the foster family engage in. She had also enjoyed her first foreign holiday.

By the end of her first term at school after starting the placement she had attended her education at a level of 94.26% (the foster carers had with T's agreement enlisted a private tutor to help her catch up in some areas) and out of 7 subjects she received 1 A, 4 B's and 2 C's for Effort (C being satisfactory). Her Head Teacher commented "Your attendance has improved dramatically....you have made a real effort this term which we know has not been easy. Keep it up". She did and continued to do so until she left school.

T's placement to date has been a real success. There was no thought from her of moving to live independently on her 16th birthday. She has dramatically reduced her excesses in relation to drinking and smoking and understands that this is a much better option for her own health. She achieved well in her GCSE's obtaining 4 'passes' as well as a Bronze Award in her ADSAN on the strength of her work experience at a local Stables. These achievements have led to her obtaining an apprenticeship with an nationally known reknowned hairdressers which involves 2 days study each week at their Academy. All of T's considerable achievements have led to her nomination in her Local Authority's Annual Award Ceremony.