

## Case Study FP4



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### **Case Study (Susan) - Placement in a relatively unplanned manner, dysfunctional attachments...but she got there!**

S. is an 8-year-old child who was placed with Families@FamilyCare Ltd when she had recently passed her 7th birthday. The placement was made in a relatively unplanned manner. S had been placed with an older sibling and the plan for both girls was one of adoption. Unfortunately, the carer felt that the increasing degree of aggression between the sisters was intolerable. She determined that although S tended to be the 'victim' it should be she who had to move. At the time of the move, S felt a perfectly understandable sense of injustice that as the innocent party she should move whilst her sister was allowed to remain - given the lack of an understandable answer she was still asking her Social Worker why this had happened many months later.. It is particularly unfortunate that only 6 days prior to her having to move that a Looked After Children review had confirmed the placement as being long term for the sisters. Sadly, for S this was her fourth placement breakdown in approximately one year. S is subject to a Care Order. She has a number of separate contact arrangements with various members of her extended birth family and her parents have separately sought to either undermine placements or in her father's case mount a legal challenge to the children being looked after. Given this history, it is unsurprising that S had little reason to trust adults and an extraordinarily confused series of attachments. At the point the placement with the M family was made there was no definitive plan apart from to try to settle the child and offer her what sense of security could be given whilst the Local Authority reviewed their options. S's education was yet again disrupted by the move and this of course was initially unavoidably compounded by the fact that only temporary arrangements could be made.

At her first Looked After Children review - held of course only a little more than 3 weeks since the previous one - it was noted by her social worker that S seemed "reasonably settled". It seems more likely that she was, sadly becoming all too accustomed to moving and that part of her defence and self-preservation instinct was to comply in the large part. The M family realised that S was to an extent best allowed to settle as well as she could; have her questions answered to the best of their ability; seek answers for her on areas in which they were ignorant; be encouraged to consider what type of activities she would like to do (she elected for 'Brownies') and supported in school and the community in general were initially she appeared rather isolated. They supported her contact, showed interest in learning about the various members of her extended family so that she felt comfortable in talking more openly and not pressured, as she evidently was by her parents, to see carers and parents as being in some way involved in direct competition.

The M's are a gregarious family with a wide circle of friends and relatives with whom they spend a good deal of their leisure time. S was invited to join in these activities and although a little reluctant initially she began to engage over time. Although in her previous placement she had apparently completed Life Story Work with the Barnardo's 'Keeping Children Safe Project' this has never been shared with S and her Social Worker is trying to obtain this work. We identified a need for S to become engaged in work with Families@FamilyCare Ltd Therapist to safely explore issues about her past which she seemed to be extremely (and understandably) confused about. Happily this work has now been successfully completed and we believe that this has contributed significantly to S feeling much more content and settled.

Our foster carers maintain a weekly diary of their children's lives and through this medium we are able to inform the Core Group and review processes of changes however slowly they occur. What is apparent is that this child once so isolated now thoroughly enjoys the company of and is accepted by her peers - she and they regularly have tea at each other's homes. She has made enormous strides both socially and academically at school, developed an interest and shows considerable skill

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as a junior 'horsewoman' - she attends a pony club each week and after her hour she has an additional private lesson for another hour.

In his report for a recent Looked After Children review, her Social Worker states "S has become a much valued and loved member of the M family. She has a particularly close relationship with M and F's granddaughter, B.....S had a problem forming attachments with males in the past. She took and was given a little while to bond with Tony but now they have a very good relationship.....S is making good progress at school, has made friends with the other five girls who are in her class (and) received an excellent end of school year report".