



families@familycare

## Families@FamilyCare Ltd

### Foster Carer Questionnaire Feedback October 2010

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#### Cover letter to Carers – gives number of returns etc

Firstly I would like to thank you for your co-operation in completing the recent Foster Carer Questionnaire. 15 out of the 30 questionnaires issued were received back, giving a 50% return. Of the questionnaires returned 60% of carers chose to identify themselves.

Whilst I will not identify any of the carers in this summary I have included all of the comments made by the carers. I did however have to make some very slight adjustments in order to respect the confidentiality of carers, children or young people.

As a student on placement I am pleased to have had the opportunity of taking the lead in this exercise which I have found extremely useful and insightful. I must however stress that any observations and views I have expressed are my own and have been presented to you unedited. Although I am on placement with Families@FamilyCare Ltd I have taken a very neutral approach in this exercise.

Within the returned questionnaires there were two positive comments directed specifically towards two members of staff. Although I have chosen not to include these comments in the feedback please be assured I will inform the members of staff concerned and their managers of the comments made.

I hope you enjoy reading the questionnaire feedback. Please feel free to comment either to myself or directly to Families@FamilyCare Ltd on any part of the feedback or observations.

Yours sincerely

Denise Farthing  
Student Social Worker



families@familycare

## Families@FamilyCare Ltd Questionnaire Feedback

October 2010

### Questions asked and returns (multi choice questions unless otherwise indicated)

#### Question 1

Why did you choose to apply to Families@FamilyCare Ltd rather than another Independent Fostering agency or Local Authority?

**As carers were given the option to choose one or more of the answers below the numbers do not equate to the total numbers of questionnaires returned.**

❖ Word of mouth recommendation, e.g. from current Families@FamilyCare Ltd foster carers; a testimonial that our service will provide the support that is needed for foster carers to do a good job.	3
❖ We liked the responses that we received and the approach of the first person that we spoke to when we first enquired.	9
❖ We researched a number of possible agencies and chose Families@FamilyCare Ltd because of its size.	7 <b>Quote: "Also due to the approach - children come first not purely just size"</b>
❖ Families@FamilyCare Ltd was in the right location for us.	3
❖ The fees paid are more generous than other agencies.	3
❖ The training packages sounded appropriate and relevant to the task.	4 <b>Quote: "Flexible i.e. weekends etc"</b>
❖ Other reasons:	

**One questionnaire was left blank for Question 1.**

**Question 2**

Do you feel Families@FamilyCare Ltd have lived up to your initial expectations?  
Please tick the box which applies.

YES	NO
14 = 93%	1 = 7%

**One carer quoted “Yes - now more so”**

**Question 3**

If the answer to the previous question is NO, I would really like to know the reasons why. Please use the space below to let me know.

- **“We thought there would be a placement when approved, work would be more regular”**

**Question 4**

What are the key reasons for you staying with Families@FamilyCare Ltd.? You may tick more than one box if you wish.

**As carers were given the option to choose one or more of the answers below the numbers do not equate to the total numbers of questionnaires returned.**

<b>The support given</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>The training</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>The fees paid</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The size of the agency</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>The location of the agency</b>	<b>5</b>

**Other reasons:**

- **“The children still come first, we appreciate the need to be commercially viable in order to stay in the market, but we value more than anything the fact that it is true in Families the ‘Every Child Matters’, it is not just a nice catchphrase!!”**
- **“The friendly staff”**
- **“I would not be happy if the agency moved further than Bamber Bridge”**
- **“Plus their friendship and help received with family problems”**
- **“They support us all the way and make our life within Fostering perfect - Thank you!”**
- **“Support given has been excellent”**

**Question 5**

Over the previous 12 months Families@FamilyCare introduced Support Plans for children in foster care. Have you had the opportunity of working with a Support Plan for a child in your care?

YES	NO	LEFT BLANK
11 = 73%	1 = 7%	3 = 20%

If you ticked **YES** have you found it beneficial?

YES	NO
11 = 100%	

If you didn't find it beneficial could you please inform me of the reasons why?

- **“Haven't used the Support Plan”**

**Question 6**

Please could you let me know how you feel about the level of overall support from Families@FamilyCare Ltd by ticking the relevant box?

<b>Outstanding</b>	12 = 80%
<b>Good</b>	3 = 20%
<b>Satisfactory</b>	
<b>Inadequate</b>	

- **One questionnaire was left blank for Question 6.**
- **One questionnaire was marked both 'good' and 'outstanding'.**

Over the last 12 months Families@FamilyCare has seen a slight increase in Carers. Do you feel this increase has affected the level of support you receive from them? Please tick the relevant box.

YES	NO	LEFT BLANK
1 = 6.5%	13 = 87%	1 = 6.5%

If you have ticked **YES** to the above question please could you provide us with details of how you feel the level of support provided has been affected?

- **“Not enough support to go around”**

**Question 7**

Have you ever used the 'out of hours service' provided by Families@FamilyCare Ltd? Please tick the relevant box.

YES	NO	LEFT BLANK
8 = 53%	6 = 40%	1 = 7%

If you answered **YES** to the above question please now tick the relevant box to tell me how you found the 'out of hours service'.

<b>Outstanding</b>	7 = 87%
<b>Good</b>	1 = 13%
<b>Satisfactory</b>	
<b>Inadequate</b>	

**Question 8**

Have you had a problem or complaint that you have spoken to Families@FamilyCare Ltd personnel about? Please tick the relevant box.

YES	NO	LEFT BLANK
6 = 40%	8 = 53%	1 = 7%

If the answer to the above question is **YES** please tick the relevant box below to indicate how well Families@FamilyCare dealt with the problem or complaint.

<b>Outstanding</b>	3 = 50%
<b>Good</b>	1 = 17%
<b>Satisfactory</b>	2 = 33%
<b>Inadequate</b>	

**Question 9**

Have you experienced any significant problems with payments from Families@FamilyCare Ltd in the last 12 months? Please tick the relevant box.

YES	NO	LEFT BLANK
	14 = 93%	1 = 7%

**Question 10**

Have you attended any Training offered by Families@FamilyCare Ltd in the last 12 months?  
Please tick the relevant box.

YES	NO	LEFT BLANK
14 = 93%		1 = 7%

If you ticked **YES** how would you grade the overall training?

<b>Outstanding</b>	5 = 36%
<b>Good</b>	8 = 57%
<b>Satisfactory</b>	1 = 7%
<b>Inadequate</b>	

To expand on the previous question how do you feel Families@FamilyCare Ltd could possibly improve the training provided?

- “To provide care for Foster children and birth children when necessary”
- “As more ‘new carers’ come to join F@FC we may need to grade training to avoid experienced foster carers repeating basics over and over”
- “The training is outstanding in all areas”
- “Not keep repeating the same training”
- “Don’t send people on courses just to ensure they’ve done some training that year. Once you’ve done it, that should be it unless a legal requirement”
- “Make the training more visual and interesting”
- “Not cancel as many”
- “To be more flexible in attendance of courses and given more information, time to arrange attendance”

**Question 11**

As a carer would you be interested in contributing to training for other carers?

YES	NO	LEFT BLANK
4 = 27%	7 = 46%	4 = 27%

One carer responded with “No - with the exception of pre-panel to offer insight into being a carer”

## **Question 12**

Do you feel a Support Group led by Families@FamilyCare would be beneficial to you?

<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>LEFT BLANK</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>

**One Questionnaire was marked “Not sure”**

If you answered **NO** to the above question would you prefer Families@FamilyCare to facilitate a Support Group rather than lead it?

Families@FamilyCare would arrange a venue, refreshments etc. but would require foster carers to volunteer to pull meetings together, set agendas and decide how, if at all, this would be communicated to the Agency.

<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>LEFT BLANK</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>

It would be useful and appreciated if you could give your thoughts and feelings on the topic of a Support Group

- **“Would love to help but I am committed to my foster child”**
- **“We cannot always get to them as school or contacts usually overlap them”**
- **“I find support groups beneficial to me but I have struggled to attend with my young child due to the venue – the venue needs to facilitate young children”**
- **“Business talk first – informal after”**
- **“I’d prefer social gatherings – i.e. Bowling, BBQ’s, Christmas party, Halloween party Etc. Less formal and more friendly and kids can come too! Can involve the whole family”**
- **We tried this and found that most carers would use the time to moan and I am not saying that we don’t all need to do this sometimes but it became counter productive and negative. Carers would pass on problems to us leading the group rather than speak direct to staff. When staff then followed up on this they would say they were fine, no problems. I personally felt put on and have felt much better and happier since I stopped attending. We asked if people would like speakers, activities etc and it was a resounding no. People wanted lunch and a moan and a gossip – very negative experience for me personally.**

### **Question 13**

If a friend or relative was interested in fostering would you recommend Families@FamilyCare Ltd to them? Please tick the relevant box.

YES	NO
15 = 100%	

**One comment was “Yes have done”**

### **Question 14**

If you were asked to name one **positive** thing about Families@FamilyCare Ltd what would it be?

- **“Children come first”**
- **“Every Child Matters and Every Foster Carer Matters – perfect scenario for good experiences”**
- **“There is always someone there to give support when needed”**
- **“Support”**
- **“Friendly staff easy to talk to”**
- **“That everyone is friendly and approachable and would do their best to help if we had a problem”**
- **“The manageable size ensures consistency, with a genuine ethos”**
- **“Listening”**
- **“Small and friendly know most of the faces down here”**
- **“Staff commitment”**
- **“Friendly environment”**
- **“My positive thing about Families@FamilyCare Ltd is my family has extended”**
- **“Always there and put themselves out to help and guide in all situations, perfect for my family”**
- **“Support from staff has been excellent always on hand when needed”**

If you were asked to name one **negative** thing about Families@FamilyCare Ltd what would it be?

- “N/A”
- “Can’t think of one”
- “Not enough holidays most other agencies 3 weeks”
- “Waiting for referrals”
- “Nothing now”
- “Nothing on FCA really but fostering in general – too much paperwork, can sometimes take time away from the ‘family and foster child’. I didn’t become a foster carer to do paperwork”
- “Although they do their best it can be difficult for staff to understand fully what it is like to deal with children in care within a home environment”
- “Not being able to do training at weekends as a couple”
- “Have not any negative thing about the company”
- “None”
- “In danger of expanding too much too quick leading to less job satisfaction resulting in, increased staff turnover, which would be very sad for all, we and the children appreciate the consistent relationships we have”

### **Question 15**

If there are any other comments you wish to add about any aspect of Families@FamilyCare to this questionnaire that you think has not been covered please use the space below to do so.

- “We think a social gathering between carers and staff would be beneficial”
- “I love the new vision/way forward for the company”
- “I appreciate recognition that residential staff and foster carers require different training and the separation that is now taking place”
- “I have only just started fostering, my 1<sup>st</sup> YP only came to live with us recently so I am unable to answer most of your questions”
- “Just to say thank you for all your hard work, guidance and friendship and also the support has been 10 out of 10. Thank you”
- “We would like to see some real consequences for non completion of training. It does not help our status as an agency if carers are not as skilled up as they would be.”
- We have had cause to speak out in a negative way in relation to Families in the past 12months, which is not a position we would have wanted to find ourselves in. We did this as we felt it was necessary to advocate fully for the child in placement. We feel it is

another credit to Families that they supported us to do this and at no point did we feel squeezed to be silent or feel shunned by the agency. All concerned made us feel like they understood why we were raising the issue and respected the fact that we felt it necessary in our professional judgement as carers. We are aware that not all organisations are as open and embracing as Families and we believe this to be a huge strength within the agency.

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## Comments on responses/Analysis

### Question 1

It is clear from the responses that initial contact with the company was the most important reason why people choose to apply to Families@FamilyCare.

The size of the company and training packages were also important factors when making a choice over other agencies.

### Question 2

This I feel is both an excellent and positive response. 93% of carers who returned the questionnaires feel that Families@FamilyCare has lived up to the initial expectations of the carers.

### Question 3

The comment from the carer who disagreed was that they thought work would be more regular. My personal comment on this is that as a company who prides itself on taking great care in matching Families@FamilyCare Limited unfortunately cannot always ensure work is regular. Carers should be reassured that consideration is made for each available carer for each referral received.

### Question 4

There are some really positive comments on this response. The main reason for carers staying is the support, followed closely by the training. Only 4 carers stated that the fees paid as the reason they are staying with Families@FamilyCare.

**Questions 5 – 10 were relating to support from Families@FamilyCare over the last 12months.**

### Question 5

11 carers said they had had the opportunity of working with a Support Plan and all of these said it was beneficial which indicates a 100% success rate. This is extremely encouraging for the future as more carers have the opportunity of working with the Support Plans.

### **Question 6**

The replies for this question regarding overall support from Families@FamilyCare were split into either Outstanding or Good categories with the majority being Outstanding (12 replies).

Furthermore 13 out of a possible 15 said that although there had been a slight increase in carers over the previous 12 months they didn't feel it had affected the support given to them. There was feedback from one carer that support had been affected due to the increase in carers which should be recognised going forward.

### **Question 7**

53% of carers have used the 'out of hours service' and 87% of those found the service to be '**Outstanding**'. Whilst 13% reported the service as '**Good**' it should be acknowledged how valuable this service is.

### **Question 8**

Fewer than 40% of carers have had a problem or complaint that they have had to speak to Families@FamilyCare about. The way in which the carers thought Families@FamilyCare dealt with these problems/complaints were split between Outstanding, Good and Satisfactory. Although none of the carers considered Families@FamilyCare dealt with the problem inadequately it is worth considering if any improvements could be made in this area to move the Satisfactory grading to either an Outstanding or Good result.

### **Question 9**

14 out of a possible 15 carers (one left blank for this particular question) did not experience any significant problems with payments. This I feel is an excellent result for the company and shows they are working effectively in this area.

### **Question 10**

All but 1 of the carers said they have attended training in the previous 12 months. (One carer left this question blank).

There were many comments regarding the training which were positive however, some comments raised issues which the company should address to establish if any changes should be made.

### **Question 11**

When asked if carers would be interested in contributing to training, 4 carers responded by saying they would be interested. One of the carers who said no went on further to say "with the exception of pre-panel to offer insight into being a carer". This may be an area that the Training Department could consider in the future to enable the carers to make a positive contribution whilst also helping address the issues raised in Question 10.

### **Question 12**

There were more carers who thought a support group led by Families@FamilyCare would be beneficial to them than against it. (One carer said they were not sure). Nearly all the carers who didn't think it would be beneficial also didn't think it would be beneficial for Families@FamilyCare to facilitate a support group.

There were many comments from carers regarding this area which I feel could be used constructively if consideration is to be made to develop a support group in the future.

I also feel that the foster carer's comments support consideration for a social group to be established.

### **Question 13**

This is a fantastic response - 100% of carers would recommend Families@FamilyCare to a friend or relative. One carer said they already have done!

### **Question 14**

The comments have been published in full for all to read. Clearly there are many positive comments and it is good to see that nearly half of all carers surveyed felt that they could either not think of anything negative or made another positive comment.

### **Question 15**

The comments given were all of a positive nature which is extremely encouraging and something that Families@FamilyCare should strive to maintain for the future.

## **Conclusion**

I feel this questionnaire has been a great opportunity for foster carers to be able to express their thoughts and feelings about the service provided at Families@FamilyCare.

In my opinion the questionnaire has achieved what it was meant to do and that is to give an overall picture of the service provided at Families@FamilyCare. The results can now be used constructively to assist in planning for the future.

I personally feel the results represent an effective company as 100% of carers said they would recommend Families@FamilyCare to a friend or relative so they must be doing something right!