

Case Study 1



family care associates

Mandy was 13 years old and very mature for her age when she 'found' Family Care Associates. Mandy's three siblings are not looked after. Mandy was accommodated under Sec 20, at the age of 7, due to her mother's inability to manage her behaviour and a series of family breakdowns. Mandy had suffered repeated rejection from her birth mother and was subject to manipulation from both her mother and her grandparents in their feud with each other.

Prior to coming to us, Mandy had had several short term placements that had quickly broken down due to her destructive and violent behaviour and constant unauthorised absences, often staying out all night and sleeping rough.

Mandy was attending our education services as an external pupil when her residential placement broke down due to her violence towards staff and 72 hours notice was given for her to leave the placement.

Her attendance at our school was poor at this time but her attitude and performance when present was very positive and we believed that if we could provide a more therapeutic model of care for Mandy, we might contribute to helping her to achieve some degree of stability. We were the more hopeful in that Mandy specifically asked to be cared for by Family Care Associates.

Mandy moved into Acorns in August 2003 and our initial review of her previous placements identified that many aspects of Mandy's negative behaviour stemmed from her being under a zero tolerance regime and having to earn everything she wanted, from unsupervised free time, to activities. We found that this was simply too difficult for Mandy to consistently achieve and that her failure in doing so left her with a sense of hopelessness, decreasing self-esteem and a tendency to disrupt and cause conflict – conforming to the expectation that she assumed others had of her.

Acorns began with a radically different approach and gave Mandy all her 'privileges', together with some negotiated, unsupervised free time within agreed boundaries and worked with her in a risk assessed manner to help her to maintain what she had gained through trust.

This was immediately successful, although not without its 'hiccups' and we continue to make positive progress in improving Mandy's behaviour. Mandy was able to improve her behaviour and consequently earn the trust for extended free time enabling her to lead a fairly 'normal' teenage life, socialising positively with her peers locally.

We worked therapeutically with Mandy, to help her understand issues around her family relationships and in particular to understand her feelings about her relationship with her mother. Contact was continually maintained with her family despite a geographic distance of over 200 miles and contact visits were supervised and facilitated with support from Acorns to the extent that Mandy was able to eventually talk with her mother about her childhood and gain some insight into her feelings towards her. This enabled them to rebuild their relationship to a level where contact became quite positive.

Mandy continued to make excellent progress and eventually in July 2007, at the age of 16, we were able to help her move closer to her family (into a family placement) from which it is hoped that she will move into an independent living situation.