

## Case Study 6



**family care associates**

Billy was referred to Acorns in December 2002 when he had just turned 7 years old.

Billy and his brother had been in and out of Local Authority care since 1996 and in November 2002 it was finally decided they could not be returned home and they became the subject of Care Orders.

Billy and his brother were removed from home as their parents were found unable to protect their children due to their continuing problem with alcohol and as both children had witnessed their father physically abuse their mother and on one occasion they had been physically abused themselves. Before living at Acorns Billy had been in 14 different foster placements and had 10 respite stays, he was separated from his brother as foster carers had felt that Billy's 'challenging behaviour' was having a detrimental effect on his brother. The experience of violence, rejection, separation, loss and the many moves within the care system resulted in Billy becoming a vulnerable young boy who stated he did not feel loved and had not learnt to trust. At this point in his life Billy's behaviour was described by professionals and foster carers as 'very antagonistic, competitive and at times violent'.

It was felt Billy would benefit from a stable and supportive placement that was able to provide him with 24 hours support and so he was placed at Acorns. As Billy had been excluded from school he also attended the Family Care Associates School whilst being integrated back into mainstream schooling.

Billy enjoyed the routine and boundaries Acorns staff were able to provide and as a small staff team they were able to keep him active and use his excess energy to positive means, for example Billy still talks about the long walks in the country he enjoyed. Billy was also able to build attachments to staff and other young people in the home as he felt safe and secure in his surroundings and had an understanding that he wouldn't be leaving Acorns until he was ready to progress to a foster family, an aim he was keen to achieve.

Billy made significant progress whilst at Acorns. He re integrated into mainstream school and in June 2005 after many visits he moved to live with a foster family in Preston. Billy's move on to a foster family was difficult for him and he struggled to adapt to family life as he had to learn to fit in and adapt to the routines of a close family and for the first time for some years he had to share the attention of his carers with other children. Billy's behaviour became quite challenging and it appeared that Billy was testing his carers in order to see whether they would continue with his placement regardless of the behaviour displayed, it was felt he was trying to keep himself from getting hurt and was rejecting his carers before they rejected him. The placement continued to have its ups and downs until July 2006 when unfortunately it had to be ended. Billy's main carer fell pregnant and on a couple of occasions Billy threatened to be violent towards her and it wasn't felt safe for the placement to continue.

Billy moved to live with the Smiths in July 2006, again this placement has had its ups and downs as again Billy tested his carers feeling insecure about his placement, however now a year and a half later he is very settled and happy and the plan is for him to remain with the Smiths until he is old enough to achieve independence. It has taken some time for Billy to

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build attachments and trust his carers but he now feels one of the family and all who know him are really proud of the progress he has made. With the support Billy received from his foster family, an excellent school, Families@FamilyCare staff and the Local Authority Billy has started to begin to trust those around him and open up about his feelings.

Billy has recently started High School and is making good progress and has recently been awarded a certificate for his excellent cooking skills. Billy still struggles at times with his social skills and still gets frustrated but with the support of his foster family and teachers at school he has learnt more appropriate ways of dealing with his anger and he is maturing into an independent, caring young man.

Billy has regular phone contact with his brother and visits him in school holidays, which he loves. Billy had some contact with his mum for a while but unfortunately this no longer takes place as Social Services are no longer able to locate her. Billy has lots of pictures and memorabilia of his childhood and has done Life Story Work with his current carers.