Going into Foster Care

I was placed with someone who had young kids and my needs were different, this led to placement breakdown. The food was crap, it was all microwaved. I have been in my present foster placement for six years. They didn’t place me correctly they got lucky! I remember going into foster care and I still remember it. I didn’t have a clue why the social worker was there, didn’t tell me anything. Mum told me and stuff packed up black bin bags and went into care. Nothing personal was packed.

Preparing For Fostering

Foster kids and foster families should be aware that a child is coming to stay. This also makes the child and family more comfortable.

Sometimes it is good to be prepared for someone who has really bad behavioural problems coming to live and mum and dad can say “this is what to do if this happens” However, young people’s privacy should be respected.

Children in care should find out info about the family they are going to stay with. It should not just be the family getting info about the child.

It must be difficult for young people who have to move about.

It’s good to know about what has happened in the past about foster children that come into care in case they self-harm and you don’t know why they do it or why they have scars etc.

It’s important to have information about the children because you need to know how to handle them if something does go wrong or they would know how they would react to different situations. On the other hand, sometimes no information is provided for some weeks after a child is placed.

You have no idea of how to act when they arrive and this can cause a lot of problems if you are sharing a room.

People need to know about the children coming into care so they know what to expect from them.

OVERNIGHTS

Foster kids should be treated the same as children that are not in CARE!!!!!!!!!

Foster children should be treated the same, being allowed to stay over at friends without police checks having to get done.

It can be embarrassing for kids to have to ask to go to a friend’s house and know the police will be involved. Therefore, they will start to refrain from going to sleepovers etc. and their social lives will deteriorate.

Police checks take too long coz u have to wait months sometimes for an overnight.
How do your foster carer’s own family treat you?

Some foster carers apply and they can’t handle it. Depends, some know how to handle you. Some foster carers children come first.

The family I am with now is perfect. I get treated like I am part of the family. Their sons and daughters treat me like a brother.

Bin Liners

It’s not really expensive or hard to issue someone with a bag to pack their things in. I think it is degrading and wrong.

Don’t Call Me “Darlin’”

Don’t call me “Darlin’”
Don’t you dare call me yours
I’m not your “wee pal” either
I’m nothing to you at all
My mother loves me, you do not
It’s not that I’ll ever be loyal to you
It’s not that I’ll ever brought here
Why was I even brought home
To this place I’d rather die
Than acknowledge you as close to me
Just please don’t call me “Darlin’”

My Place

This place is warm yet cold.
This place can be light or dark.
This place can be tranquil or booming.
This place can be peaceful or full of war.
This place is full of hope and yet the place of shattered dreams.
This place is safe and dangerous at the same time.
This place is love and hate.
This place can smell of apples or roses.
This place can be lonely or all the company you need.
This place is both now and then.
This place can be right here or a million miles away.
This place is wherever you are.
Jessica’s Story

What do you and your friends think of you fostering?

I think that my family fostering is the best thing that ever happened to me. I have met so many people. And it’s such a rewarding job. I like getting to meet different people and getting to know them. My family never treats the foster children any different from us, we all get treated the same way and no-one is left out.

Before a child or young person comes to live with you, is this discussed with you and who discusses this with you?

When there is a new child coming to our home my mum is the one who usually tells me about him/her, she would discuss maybe why they are in care, how long they will probably be with us for. We usually get a phone call from social workers to ask if we could take a child in. Fostering is a challenging job, you can get a phone call anytime at such short notice but that’s the whole point of the job.

What do you think your role is with the children/young people in care?

I feel as if my role as a daughter of a foster carer is to welcome all children to our home as I am so young as well I feel as if I understand the children more when they tell me their problems. I like to make them feel comfortable and get to know them, I like to give them a chance in life that they have never had, I like to make them happy and show I do respect them for who they are, not what they are.

Are there any issues you have to deal with through fostering and how do you cope? Do you find confidentiality an issue?

Fostering can be really hard to deal with sometimes. I get too attached to the children, it’s hard to let them go when they are going back to their parents. You get so attached to them they are like your real sister or brother. We have been fostering a girl for 7 years now and we are both the same age, so we practically are like real sisters so we might argue over silly things but I just have to cope with it and solve it. I do find confidentiality an issue because some of my friends ask about the foster children. It is hard to tell my close friends I can’t tell them I do find it hard.

Do social workers include you when they visit. Do they ask about your thoughts and feelings?

Social workers never ask me how I am or how I feel. I find social workers hard to describe sometimes. I feel as if some of them can’t get out of the door quick enough, I think I would feel a little better if the social workers included me too and asked how I was. But at the end of the day I’m not in care and that’s all that matters. As long as the social workers are there for the children in care then that’s what matters.

My Experience

I remember approaching the door of my soon to be new home, with my Mum directly by my side, my uncle on the other and my social worker leading the way. My eyes once again began to fill up with water. I could feel the cold tear running down my hot flustered cheek, as one dropped another followed. I felt sick and queasy. My Mum gripped onto my hand as if she was never going to let go. My social worker rang the door bell and it wasn’t long before a pleasant looking man opened the door. He invited us in. I remember the sweet smell it made the atmosphere feel warm and homely. We took a seat on the pale pink couch I sat on the edge as I was afraid of settling in. Just as we began a conversation a lady came through from what looked like the kitchen with a warm looking smile on her face. They both introduced themselves.

4. Forgotten Voices
I suppose one of the hardest things about fostering, one of the hardest things in life, is saying goodbye to those you love. Worse, though, is not having the chance.

Many people have passed through my home, some staying for a short while, others for years; some close, some distant; some leaving jubilant, some tearful. As time begets distance, memories fade and blur, except those which you feel most intensely. One person remains in memory more vividly than anyone else.

I was about four when my older brothers left home for university. She arrived not long after, and I think I may have transferred some of my sibling affection onto her from the start. To my child’s mind, I couldn’t see any difference between her and blood, she spent a lot of time with me, and I became very attached to her.

Then she was gone.

No-one really told me what had happened, but she left abruptly, and I never had a chance to say goodbye.

I missed her. I still remember how much I pined for her. But life moves on, and I moved on, albeit hoping that one day she would come back. Then a letter came. She sent me a letter detailing when she was going to visit me. I was ecstatic I remember excitedly counting down the days, planning what we would do, where we would go.

The day came, but she never arrived.

I remember being heartbroken, with the intensity that only a child can feel. I waited for her to arrive for weeks after, thinking that maybe today would be the day, watching the gate in vain.

I never saw her again.
**Contact for young people**

Some children don’t want to see certain people regularly. They should be asked if they want to go rather than a social worker just arriving up at the house to take them away to see someone who might scare the child.

There should be support workers and social workers available to help you contact and see your family.

Contact with family was not much of a problem but I would say that trying to get in contact with your worker is where the problems lies.

When I was about 11 seeing my little brother was like waiting on Christmas it was so agonising.

I have not had much contact since I was 7.

My contact with my family has been fine. I stay locally to my family and see them regularly.

**Education**

"Foster Syndrome"

The immediate judgment of a young person as they have been labelled a "foster kid" is unfair as it isn’t the young person’s fault that they are in care, this occurs in school’s often.

My experience of education has been a particularly good one throughout my experiences I have received tuition throughout which has benefited me greatly.

Some of the foster families you live with will stand by you, for instance going to university or college they will help you.

Moving primary school. Primary 4 and Primary 5 held me back as there were different ways of teaching and lost lots of pals.

One school move to another I didn’t know how to do joined up writing or maths, they expected me to do it, and I fell behind.

The new class could be halfway through a project and you need to catch up or you might get different work until they finish the project.

Quite a lot of teachers stereotype you if you are in foster care they treat you as if you have done something wrong or not as bright as other kids.

You might get picked on. You find it hard to go up to them, hang around with them to start over and make new friends.

Schoolwork support to make it easier to catch up if work is missed.

Teachers should try and understand young people who are in care and who have needs.

Children in foster care should not be treated differently in school because that gives the other children the ok to treat them differently.

Teachers should be aware when children are in need.

I hated having to move school where my entire friend was.

Been at the same school - positive.

You meet other people and get to know them and then you get told you’re moving school again.

I have been in six primary schools and one high school. Some of the families I was living with was temporary.
Sons and Daughters of Foster Carers

Sons and daughters of carers should also have a say in what is happening in their home, as they are an important part in a child’s placement. They also have a bigger responsibility than other children!

Sons and Daughters definitely have to grow up quicker. We have to deal with situations others our age read about in magazines. We have to learn how to cope when certain things happen and how to carry on with our own problems when our parents are busy with other kids.

One parent left in the house with child, sons and daughters shouldn't have to stay in with them just in-case allegations are made. Sons and daughters have lives too!

Kids in foster care should be allowed to go on holiday with foster carers. The children in care don't get a break why should the foster carers. They are trying to give kids a normal life; it isn't a good picture if everyone goes on holiday except them.

Son’s and daughters of carers should get more time with their own family but they should not make the foster children feel unwanted.

It is good to have time with my parents but it must be hard for the kids knowing they are being sent away so we can have “family time”.

It makes them remember we are not their blood relatives even though we are close. However, sometimes it is vital that we get a break from particularly difficult kids who maybe can’t cope.

If one of the foster kids comes to you with a serious problem you have no idea how to act.

Training is a good idea. It would help the children of families to understand why the foster children do something or learn how to help them instead of making things worse.

This publication is a unique collection of the thoughts, ideas and feelings of young people who have direct experience of foster care either as a young person who is fostered or as a son or daughter of foster carers.

Thank you for taking the time to read ‘Forgotten Voices’ and that in reading it there will be positive change for all children and young people who experience foster care in Scotland.

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