

Kinship Care – Case Study

(*The names of the people in this case study have been changed to fictitious names.)

Jack is 10 years old, and has been living with his Uncle David and Aunt Mary for the last 15 months.

Jack originally came into care three years ago, because of significant concerns about his parents' problematic drug use, domestic violence, and their inability to prioritise and meet Jack's needs.

Jack was initially placed in a short-term fostering placement whilst care proceedings were underway. A kinship assessment was undertaken of Jack's maternal grandparents, but they were assessed as unsuitable to be permanent kinship carers for him.

Jack's paternal Uncle, David, and his wife, Mary, also considered at that point being assessed for full-time care of Jack, but in discussion with social workers, did not feel that was the right time either for them (their relationship was relatively new), or for Jack (it would have meant him moving to a city in the south of England). David and Mary were, however, assessed and approved as respite / holiday carers for Jack as they had a pre-existing and positive relationship with him.

At that time, the care plan for Jack was to move to long-term foster carers. Just under two years ago, suitable foster carers were identified, and Jack moved to live with this new family. Unfortunately, within a couple of months, the carers changed their minds, and felt that they could not, after all, offer Jack a long-term home with them.

Jack's Uncle David and Aunt Mary considered their position, and requested that they be assessed to provide a permanent home for Jack. They had seen Jack regularly since he had been in care, and their relationship with him had developed and cemented. A Kinship Care Assessment was undertaken; David and Mary were approved as Kinship Foster Carers in December 2013, and Jack moved to live with them in January 2014.

Jack's move represented a huge change for him, as it meant him leaving Leeds and moving to the south of England, along with the change of friends and school that this entailed. However, he has gained the security provided by the love and commitment to him by his Uncle and Aunt, he knows that he is 'wanted', and he has been able to live within his family network.

There have been challenges in the placement. Jack displays a degree of hyperactive behaviour both at school and at home; he struggles with concentration, can be disruptive, and is demanding of attention. This is very much thought to be linked to his previous life

experiences, and a response to the trauma and stress he suffered as a young child, along with the rejection from his last carers, and the uncertainty he had faced about his future.

There is also the professional challenge, of supporting the placement at such a distance from Leeds, and in trying to ensure that our “Child-friendly Leeds” aspiration is as much a reality for Jack as it is for children living in Leeds. Jack has had the support of a good primary school, which has been really pro-active at providing him with the additional support and help in school that he needs, and academically, he is starting to catch up with where he should be. Equally importantly, Jack has had the love and patient care from his Uncle and Aunt, and with the birth of their own baby, has a real sense of being part of a loving family.

An email I received recently from David conveys in a small way, the benefits of this placement for Jack, and the support provided from the Kinship Care Team:

“When I picked Jack up from after school club on Friday one of his particularly nice teachers took me aside and said “what a change in that little boy, such a pleasant lad and what strides he has made, sometimes it brings a tear to my eye; he's so happy and confident now”

It is one year tomorrow since the day I drove to Leeds and collected him and his belongings and he moved to live with us.

Thank you very much for all your help and support thus far, and for your strong recommendations when we went to Panel 14 months (and a lifetime) ago!!”