Participant: F9

Title: How do foster carers and teachers attribute the challenging behaviour of Looked after children?

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Location: Foster Carer Home

Interview: CFB (I)

Interviewee: Participant F9 (P)

Age: 66

Sex: Male

Foster Carer Years: 4

I: Great, check its going, perfect. Ok so the, for the kind of how it works really, I have some guiding questions and some prompts but really its more just an informal conversation about your experiences really and it can often be easiest to focus on one child in particular, so I don’t know If there is a child in mind that stands out as being one that’s had more challenging behaviour. So we’ll kind of focus on them, but before that can I ask you, just to get some demographic details, to state your age, gender and years being a foster carer please.

P: Yes, I’m 66, we’ve been a foster carer for sort of four years, and what was your last question?

I: Just gender

P: Male

I: Perfect thank you. Ok so first question, I don’t know if you’ve got a child in mind? If I could just ask you to start off just by describing them to me

P: Right, so the focus is on challenging behaviour,

I: Yeah

P: Right ok, because there’s sort of two, I’ve got one who was 10 but he had challenging behaviour, but he couldn’t verbalise it because he was disabled and it was like treating a three year old, disabled and downs syndrome, so it’s quite difficult to know what exactly he was thinking because he couldn’t say very much when he first came to us, so we had to try and find tools and techniques to try and get him to trust us and symbols signs touch things and learning a bit of Makaton, so that was quite challenging for quite a number of months before erm, before we could make things better, you understand, because it was a child with, so hence it was difficult to see and like sleeping patterns and what what, [inaudible] to keep him occupied. He wasn’t nasty or anything like that. We knew there were things going on there, but he just couldn’t express things. So, we found that, we were learning as we are, because we’d never come across it. And having to, so to help us we got to know his social worker well, we got to know his school, he went to a really good school, so we went into the school to speak to the teachers and they were great and we were involved so we were working with the teachers who just loved working with this child, to see him progressing and to see him settled. He had us there as well so we we’re all working together to try and do the best for this ten year old, and see him coming through, seeing him how he could starting to express and seeing if there were things he was worrying about stuff, we could try and say well, get them to tell us well what are you worried about, so we had little, so the tools we used working with his school and his social worker was we had little, we started looking at Makaton but also little picture cards to help so that he could, that’s tools that the school used, so you gave him instructions to do something on little picture cards, so we used that technique at home. And we, one of the things that helped was maybe, so in the morning after breakfast we would tell him so what was he doing today, so we looked at the pictures “what are you doing today now [child’s name]”. and you took it as a day by day basis. And we found that kind of helped him settle and we could see that he was happy to go to school and coming home from school you could see that he was that he’d obviously, he was quite, he’d done his best at school. Because we were talking to his teachers, talking to his social worker and just seeing him progressing, which was great to see it, y’know from being, because its like it’s such a silent world for him. So we found that really challenging, part of that was maybe sleep, he wasn’t sleeping, he was waking up at 1 o’clock 2 o’clock in the morning, every morning, that’s when your day started, so we used to change it about a little bit, so I would get up or [partner] would get up, and actually we, and latterly he was with us for just over a year and by that time he, he was happy in himself, expressing himself through like music and songs, pictures were coming on and great, and because of our close communication with his school, his teachers who were really dedicated and his helpers and his social worker, let’s not say too much about social workers because through that year he had 5 social workers, due to one or two social workers went y’know just went off sick, stress whatever, just got changed, left the job. So that was quite...

I: Wow, that’s tough.

P: So that was tough, so we, I guess that brought us more into closeness with school, his teachers, social worker and so eventually, latterly he did have, his 5th one was a good social worker, and we got close with them, and you could see [child] responded. So that was good. And in a city school, and actually transitioning him back into his family and an uncle came forward, he didn’t go back to his mum and dad because there were lots of issues, but he went back to a, an aunt and uncle came forward so that was, the great thing was to see him go back into his family. So, we knew that they were going to transition him over to his family he was in a far better place than when he came to us. At least he could express, he was saying some words, erm, because the school were really good with him, you could see him progressing, you could see the way because we had friends, a network of friends who, what were there as well, although to say a negative thing a lot of our friends, because our family’s quite far away like up Scotland and my daughter down but my daughter is great and her husband to be then were quickly got because them being in social care social working, they were keen to see, because they never come across little [child] as well, but to see him progressing, he needed us all to, atleast when we handed transitioned him back to his family he was in a far better place, and to see, because he had a lot of potential but he just needed a lot of time, but he wasn’t sleeping. At least then he was sleeping until four or five in the morning, so it wasn’t one or two. But he did he latterly we kept in touch, his family kept in touch with us initially for a little while inviting me to his birthday party and stuff, and because the transition had changed back, because of the change to a different environment he went back to getting up at 1 or 2 in the morning. Getting him down was ok, 6 o’clock half past 6, but 1 or 2 in the morning he was back up, so they were having to deal with that, and we were just remembered what it was like. But that’s it, it was challenging but just see the progression. But the other lad, I don’t know if [partner] mentioned it was another little lad little [child’s name] who we still keep in touch with [child’s name] we had [child’s name] for about 15 months. [child’s name] was totally different from [child’s name] he was on six, well he was six, he’s now seven, but he was on it, y’know he was wow, hyperactive, y’know he, and err, he was his family situation was really difficult in many many ways and he came to us and it was a new change and he was super, hyperactive, clever, we sussed out pretty quick he was a pretty clever, he had the potential of this little lad, but obviously hard to be, y’know you had to really be, it needed two of us to be on it because he had like a ten minute, he could look at something for sort of ten minutes and that was it, “what are we doing next? What are we doing next?” and he was, he was so hypervigilant, and very verbal, which we knew exactly the way he was feeling. If he didn’t like summin, he was very vocal...

I: ...he would tell you...

P: ... so that was that was different from, another challenge, it was so different. And you’ve just got to get on with it, you, again, you cope with it and the great thing is when you transition, and he transitioned into a foster family which is another another fostering him back into, transitioning him into long term care or we knew he wasn’t going to go back to his family which is sad as well because that’s obviously you want them to go back to their family. But again we were working with his school, when he first came to us we were travelling a long way to the school that he was in. lots of other kids with behaviour problems, behaviour, we got him into, we got him, he went back to his family for a bit which didn’t last too long unfortunately that went really bad again so he came back to us in a worse condition, worse behavioural problem, with like, we had to start again, and then did he have, oh and he had the same social worker, which was one good point, who [child’s name] got on with. So we’re starting again with that we did we working, we did, when he came back to us, one of the conditions of coming back to us was that we, because at that time before we were travelling up and down to [location] every day sitting in the car worked out 4 hours a day, an hour there an hour back, going back at three o’clock we did that for about 2 months, and we just said we’re not going back to that, that’s just because that’s when you get these little kids their behaviour to try and minimise the changes, and at least if you keep him at the same school even though it’s a big change, of family and not family all the rest of it coming back into care, but if we can keep the school as stable as you can, so that’s why we agreed to keep it, which is a lot of, well that’s like four hours in your day and that went on for just under 8 weeks, and it went to court and we thought well that it was going to continue, but we couldn’t believe the courts sent him back to his family, back to his nan! So, we were just, and his social worker was absolutely amazed, we were amazed, the whole organisation, but the court decided he was to go back, and he did, so which we had to do, and we were given 24 hours’ notice to say pack his bag, he’s gone.

I: wow, that’s tough

P: So that’s after seeing to try and do the best for him and seeing him progressing and seeing him starting to get a bit stable and starting to like us, like being here, to go back to his family, but of course we just had to go with it and then four weeks later to get a phone call saying, it’s not working, he’s erm, his family’s taken him off school, he’s not been at school, etc. we just thought, oh my goodness, for the poor lad, it must be. So, he’s happy to come back to us, but he was in a different situation, he was worse, he was behaviour, you can imagine. And we just had to start from scratch, his social worker was across it as well, so we worked closely with the social worker and then, so he was monitored regularly every week I think the social worker was here, and this went on. And erm, so we knew then that it was going to be pretty long term, so we had to go with it, but the condition of him coming back was that we got him into the local school, so that’s fortunately that was a lot less travelling for...the local school who were really enthusiastic about him, I don’t think they had a, maybe in theory they had details of a child in care, but they were, so they were really enthuse, they were up for it, so we worked closely again with the school and it was just great to see and I mean [child’s name] was doing stuff teaching other kids’ stuff and languages and all the rest of it, y’know it was a challenge for everybody but at the end you just want the best for the child, and erm, to see him so, and he gets a new uniform, has lots of changes, and you know he’s only six, and he’s had such a challenging childhood up to six anyway, so yeah then he needed both of us, but to see him, but we knew the potential, we knew when he came back although we were starting again, what keeps you going is you really just want the best for them, and that’s where the teachers working together on it, the school social worker foster parents we all have to be on the same wavelength, because we all want the best for the child. And it was I say about coming through and we eventually decided with transition there that they were looking for a foster family, which was err, because he was normally at the higher limit of a child looking for a long-term family for long-term care which was just, y’know, yeah so we started looking, the social worker was looking for a forever family and low and behold we looked at, we went to one of these days up in London where we had, one was a same-sex couple one was another couple who were interested in, to go through all that so to work with [child’s name], because his behaviour was getting better he was getting more settled, but it needed us still to be on it, he was still hyper, so that did, so we thought we were looking at long-term care because the adoptive side was looking a bit, but all of a sudden, a newly graduated, a newly passed the board adopted family came forward, which was just a real answer to prayer and wow, really interested, seen some the little video that you take of [child’s name] out playing football and the rest of it, and they saw it and err so we arranged to meet this couple and the first time we met this couple was with the social worker we met to discuss, just talking to this couple we just thought this could really work, if we worked together this really could. So we were really up for giving it ago., so they were working, they’re a new family themselves, so working through the transition and err, thankfully so, March this year he went and it was just, and we still keep in touch, this will be the first Christmas with his new mamma and papa and it was just, so that’s what keeps you going, although all the trials and testing and wrecking their bedrooms and all that sort of stuff, which unfortunately youngsters do when they’re in care and they, we were not too bad with that, but his new adopted family he’s been testing them y’know things like, and it’s just, but they’re sticking with it, and the thing is just because were all working together on it so they came to us quite, working through the transition, which is really intrusive as well that sort of 20 day period is, they’re here at 7 o’clock in the morning and they go away at 7 o’clock at night, y’know day in day out to see how to learn, and then we go to their house in similar in the morning and its so, its intrusive for us, but for a little 7 year old. But you just want it to work and they really wanted it to work, we really want it to work, the social worker was up for, stayed with it and wanted it to work and that’s what did it. And y’know he still got and we could see the potential of the little lad with the right potential, everybody, he, this lad, could forget about all his background, because I don’t want to think too much about his upbringing and its, there’s lots of stuff going on there. But now he’s in a new family, and he’s got, the whole, the potential of this little lad, and the family he’s gone into is great to see. And we’re still in touch with them, they want us to stay, we said look we’ll stay in touch as much as you want, let us know, so this will be his first Christmas, he had two Christmases with us and he helped us put that tree up and stuff so he’s now in a new family, so they’ve already sent a picture last week of him putting the tree up with his new family and that, so all these little things so it’s sort of like wow. So this will be different for Christmas again, he’s gonna be wining and dining so to speak with this new family, he’s got cousins and aunties and uncles and granny and gran and grandpas, which is massive changes, but its only working because everybody’s got on board with it and we’ve all dealt with it. So they’ve they came to us, they still come to us now for, little [child’s name] or sometimes things will happen and they’ll contact us and say “what did you do when this happened?” y’know, and we’ll we’re happy to, so we don’t always know but we did this, cause we’re looking at books and stuff to help them, they’ve done a lot of research because this is new for them, it’s a new child, they’ve never looked after a child before, so they’re coping with it day by day and I mean to see how he’s jumped grades in his swimming lessons now, they tell us his reading grades and that, you would have thought y’know two years ago when he first came to us, y’know, people, we just felt people had given up because his behaviour was bad.

I: What were some of the challenging behaviours that you

P: sorry?

I: What were some of the challenging behaviours?

I: The challenging behaviours were just that he was, because his attention, he had sometimes less than ten minutes and he would change so quickly, “all right let’s go” and he’d look at something and wow, he was off. He’s running, so it needed both of us to, challenging behaviour as well was wow, I watch what I’m saying he did a, he was accusing me of hitting him, which, so that set alarm bells, he’d been with us about six seven months by then, he’d been back with us again until, so it was always towards bath times, so at bath times we always made sure that both of us were around, and the bathroom door was open, it was around and about sort of bath time that all of a sudden that [partner] came in, he never said to me, he said to [partner] “oh [foster carer] hit me when we were in the bathroom”, totally y’know you sort of think ’woah’ where did that come from, and you just sort of think ”oh yeah and he hit me in the back” and [partner] there’s no sort of because it starts setting alarm bells when he starts accusing you of hitting him. so to make sure we sort of phoned his social worker and said look he’s accusing, twice he did it anyway, so you just take note of it, you just remember, you take note of it, your safeguarding comes in, oh ok. From then on, any time he was bathing and stuff, anything there was always two of us around, so then it was keeping yourself safe, because he’s a clever little cookie and he knows y’know. So yeah just stuff like that, so that was challenging, you don’t want accusations and you obviously want the best for them. It just came from nowhere because things were happening fast so. I suppose the challenging behaviour was well, was knowing, because he was now in our lives so were inviting him we were taking him places that we wanted to, we were also involved in a local church up the road so we were bringing him into that kind of environment, so that’s kind of risky, risky taking him up to church, so he’s meeting other friends of ours who’ve got children and they want to know him, etc, and there so it’s kind of risky and its obviously, but everybody was very positive, they all knew that [child’s name] was a child in care with us, and we were, and he was calling us – and other kids would think oh is this [child’s name]’s mum and dad or, we got called grandparents, I’ve been called that at the football team, you just say enough, so it keeps yourself safe, you’re not telling any lies but you just kind of kept it a “oh [child’s name] is with us for a little while he’s in care and we’re just going through a part of his life to help him” sort of thing. So that’s sort of when we we’re up at the church, and fortunately he adapted into it well, which was another scary point we thought, because you don’t know do ya, he’s not been to church, been brought up in church on a Sundays or the school he goes to, there’s limited even at Christmas there’s limited stuff comes out, so having to deal with that you see, so fortunately, obviously a lot of prayer goes into it, we prayed for this little lad every, we wanted the best for him, we wanted and fortunately he went into a class and y’know there was days ok where he was a bit, the Sunday school teachers were aware, we had spoken to them and said y’know just, so there was more than one there was always 2 or 3 teachers there or support people and the church were great at, his schools were great, his TA he latched onto, the school teacher as well but his TA in there, so he was virtually getting 1:1 tuition, so because of, because they wanted to make it work so we had lots of meetings with them to discuss how [child’s name]’s progression and other parents might have, y’know because he’s come into this and there’s other parents maybe say stuff to the teachers and y’know the football team, he loved his football, so Saturday, so I was meeting other mums and dads at the football and grandparents and I’m getting. So it just, so that’s all challenging and its stuff that we hadn’t...and you’ve just got to do the best you can and but the main thing is just keeping [child’s name], letting him know he’s safe and we’re there for him and you could see that he was bonding with us so much so that when he did want to go to his adopted family he really wanted to stay with us and we had to say [child’s name] you can’t stay with us because, in a few years you’re going to have to start looking after us because we’re so old, and he went yeah yeah, and I said yeah you’re going to have to look after us, because I’m not going to be able to walk, it’s not going to be football [child’s name] it’s going to be walking sticks. “ahh I suppose so”. So, know he’s started calling me old, he starts calling me old and wrinkly just a little bit of a joke. But that’s taken a bit of time for him to, he had that little, it takes time for him to sort of realise that he can say that. But because he was on it he was...but yeah he’s coming on great and its coming to a real lots of challenging times, and that’s why a lot of stuff’s documented and we’ve passed that all on, and his new adopted family are really they’re looking at, they’re looking at the bigger picture and looking at all this psychology stuff. And trying to get him, he’s at another new school now, so they’re going through changes and he seems so far he seems to be doing great. So they’ve been coming to us to ask us “how did you deal with new schools” and we’ve just passed on this stuff. So that’s what it’s about, good communication, good you know your passing on information to see, and it does work and I’ve said that at one of the forums for social services, up at [local authority offices] that it does work when everybody communicates, is on it, they’re not trying to be bloomin’ prima donnas, they’re just working together and we’re just wanting the best for the little child in care. And it does work so it’s a success story, and he’s now gone off not just into care, but he’s out of care and he’s in an adopted family, so that’s what you want. That is, y’know, we were, so it doesn’t happen everyday, because we’ve heard of a few breakdowns even in adopted families, and it’s sad when you hear even after years and years and the whole family is impacted by it, because it is it impacts the whole family. We just keep praying for wee [child’s name], and we always do what we can. But to see, to see how well we dealt with, because we all got round when anything happened at school or that, we all got round and discussed it and we and everybody shared and you could see that they all wanted to do their best and working well with the school and the teachers because they were up for it, they had never witnessed this before, they had maybe read stuff, stories, but so, they were really up for it, they through a lot of their resources at it, and I, that’s what was required, and they yeah they had a success they’re and we’ve told them they were really part of the success story. Yeah so, it’s all working together.

I: So, when you talked about some of the challenging behaviours that you saw, so you talked about some of the, I guess concentration span, and kind of, yeah, like what do you think, like why do you think he had difficulties with concentration or attention, what do you think that was?

P: I think because he err, although he was at school, and I think that he I think he was looking at stability in family and maybe longing to what’s happened in the past things that have happened and stuff with he was still going on in his head, so when he was at school he still wasn’t, he just wasn’t in a place to learn and that’s why sometimes it was only a few minutes and then his mind is thinking other stuff, so hence he would do things to cope with that, his coping mechanism was maybe to go and have a bit of another child at school he would have a bit of a wrestle which he shouldn’t have been doing and maybe he would even hit the child which we got called in a few times about that. So it was because he wasn’t in a place to learn and I think as time went on with us and got settled into school he was far better, and that’s when he had 1:1. Because sometimes he, the classroom space was too loud for him, so he would be taken out of class with a TA and do, and you could see him excelling and we were told when he was on a 1:1 on his own, he was working at his maths, he was working at it, but when in the class it was noisy and just with the other kids doing stuff and saying stuff he he just brought him back memories of stuff what he, stuff that might have happened in the past or his family when he was younger and it just sound as if he’s not had a brilliant childhood, unfortunately. So, his mind was not in the right place I felt.

I: Yeah, and do you think that kind of understanding of why he was behaving in that way, did that change how you responded to it do you think?

P: Yeah, Yeah, we erm, we felt we just sometimes had to, just to, keep him close to us, and just listen to him and just ask him y’know “you’ve not had a great day at school today, why is that? what were you thinking about?”, so you were very, yeah didn’t have to say too much you just had to be there, very sort of, eventually he would take time to tell you and he would say “oh so and so said something” and that’s upset his whole day. So the whole day was, yeah and we learnt that sometimes or maybe he played in the breaktime, he always liked to play football so he got maybe a little bit of a push or a shove or a trip at football, he never forgot that come the afternoon, pfff, he was on it. That person, even before I’ve seen it even at football on Saturday morning, at the end of the football he would go and do something, and he would then just push that person out the way or trip them up he never forgot the earlier on. So, it was like getting his own back, and so I, a couple of times I I’d say to him and I’d say [child’s name], why did you do that? “oh because...” and sometimes it would be “I dunno” and I would say what happened earlier a little, he’d say sorry but that wasn’t good enough it was physical, and he was very physical and if so it took a while even at football, to, some parents they spoke to me and which I was ready to defend [child’s name], and they were saying “oh [child’s name] is quite aggressive in football in tackling” and I said “yes we are trying”, so his coach would say to me, take [child’s name] out for 10 minutes to sit down and be quiet, take him out these techniques were used, so I would then go and speak to him and say “oh you can really hurt, if you tackle” and he wasn’t going for the ball he was tackling them and even at 6 years old you could hurt somebody so y’know so I had to say, and the parents are here and they’re sort of pfff, “that’s my child he’s kicking”, so it was challenging just dealing with that on the football, in the classroom, his teacher would ask us to stay if we’re picking him up, would ask us to stay behind for a bit and would say oh [child’s name] did, so we had a book, we had a book that we had, the teachers wrote in and we wrote in if anything happened over night we put it in the book, and they would throughout the course of the day look in the book and would see “oh [child’s name] is not in a good place today, he didn’t eat his breakfast this morning, we don’t know what going on but we asked him and very quiet” and of course that came out in class and hence, because we’d wrote in the book the teacher would hopefully pick it up quite early on you know that he wasn’t in a good place, so his TA would then take him out of class and have a little chat with him and that and so he responded that way. We sort of used all these tools to try and... and it did work because he eventually eh did come and and he got on really well with his TA which was great because it helped that he got on well with teacher and got on with the deputy head as well, because we were all, we’re all at it, we’re all just really wanting the best. And to see him, and he go, a long story short he’s still got from his first school he keeps in touch with one or two young lads, and we saw one with his family yesterday up at the church actually he went to see and ask and we knew, and that’s brilliant he’s set those – but that took a lot of work for everybody, from initially he was kicking this little lad off the pack every Saturday which is just, y’know it’s not, his behaviour was and for everybody but we all kind of, well fortunately they managed, they were happy to see them and they started sort of kicking together and started playing together on the same side, and initially it was I’m not playing on his side, so they were playing against each other on the same side, but they’re only 6 or as I say 7 now, but erm.

I: What do you think enabled or allowed them to go from not wanting to play together at all to then being friends?

P: erm, that, well I think it’s, I think [child’s name] saw the closeness of one or two of the other lads playing on the team, they were but these other lads knew each other from because they were at first school first year and second year, well [child’s name] comes in and he was, he definitely was the odd one out, coming in trying to make friends and a lot of the boys and girls had known each other for nearly 3 or 2 years, so they’re already set who their pals and who they saw after school, so it was hard for him and we were, and it is hard, and and we had to come alongside him and trying to explain. And it takes time, so his way of dealing with it was to, he was making his mark, he was the one who was going for the ball, no matter who they are bfff, break times, and even in the classroom, but then the teachers were onto it because they were monitoring it, they could see because he was so, they were always watching and y’know he would come into the room like this and he would say “oh what’s this, where has that come from”, because he knew in the morning that it wasn’t there, but it was there now “oh where did that come from?” pff, he spotted it right away, because he’s just on it. But to see it, going back to the friendships thing I think was I think he was a bit jealous of seeing other boys and girls but we were trying to explain to him how that was “they’ve known each other for two years they’ve been in a class, they’ve been in pre-school, year 1, now they’re in year 2 and you’re new”, so just trying to y’know come alongside and just try you know not to be verbal with him and kick him on the pitch just be yourself, play football, play safe. We always said tackling, make sure you go for the ball, if you’re not going to make it for the ball, don’t go for the ball unless you think you’re going to make it because you could hurt somebody, and you don’t want to be hurting somebody, because girls play the football as well so there’s girls, so you’re trying to always trying to explain to them. So it was and you could see that it was starting to sink in and it was always at the point where pass the ball pass the ball, and there was one or two times where it came, the coaches were great and they used to change the team around a little bit so when the team were playing well they were passing, the coach was on it and we were even the dads and I were saying oh you guys you’re playing really well. So, you’re encouraging them to when you saw them playing well passing it, they’re scoring goals so your saying yeah go, you’re scoring goals, so they’re all fighting now to score goals. And so, when a few weeks before that they were all individual, they were playing as a team, but you say, if you play as a team, you’re gonna score goals, you play individual, you’re all going to get tired quicker. So he did have a few y’know 10 minutes off the park, coach would say, have a word with me and say, so we went through all that he try and go back and explain that yeah I’d mentioned it to [partner] as well and so she could later on maybe like mention it. “oh, did you enjoy the football?” “oh yeah it was a good day” “oh [foster carer] was telling me that yeah you scored a gaol but there was a time you got taken out, what was that all about?” so it was times, so it was just choosing the times, to bring these things up but also to build up on, because I don’t think he didn’t seem to be used to, actually the early days he was always downing himself, always negative stuff, that was just the way, so we always sort of, the whole thing we were always sort of building him up so when he come home from school it was always “oh I see in the book here [child’s name] they were really pleased with you” so he was, and he kinda got a wee bit coy, so when it came to times like presentations, he got certificates for a few things up at social services he said “oh I don’t want..” and we said [child’s name] look, see there’s all the other boys and girls going up and he said I’ll just...so he went from early on he would just sit in his seat and he was given it to the last time he was up there and I said “[child’s name] you go up there and you get your certificates”, because he was, but 6 months earlier there was absolutely no way, he was holding your hand, and look [child’s name] I’ll go up with you I’ll go up with you look, you deserve these certificates you’ve done really well, you’ve tried hard at his, and he almost wanted, anyway, low and behold his name gets called out, bff he’s up there!

I: Oh bless, that’s so nice.

P: So, I mean that’s, when he first came to us there’s no way he would, he just seemed to be. Yeah, so we’re working from that and we learn from that and we realised he didn’t get praise for a lot of things, he was, because maybe erm, his way of dealing with things was breaking, so new toys as well, which he would break the toys, deliberately break them which is to see all that is, so we erm, you’ve obviously got to deal with that so when he was, before he used to take the toys away from him, he didn’t get them, oh you’re not looking after that, you’re breaking that, pff, but we got, and he was told stuff, well he shared stuff with us from when he was with his family and contact he would share with I don’t know if that’s what his family said to him or not, but we just had to go with it, and that’s when we spoke to the social workers when he was in the contact centre to say, you need to be on it. Some of the stuff that’s coming, [child’s name] doesn’t need to know all that, because he’s picking up on it, and he’s going back to school and that. So it all adds, it’s a journey for the poor lad and yeah but we’ve just got to. I mean the behaviour as I said dealing with all that, I’ve got the impression they’re all different and he, so we just had to build him up.

[partner]: right I’m off to the dentist

P: Right see you later

I: Nice to see you, thank you very much.

[partner]: Bye for now, I think its again, because I think we met you at the what do you call it the children's thing in the summer...

I: Oh erm [name of holiday club]?

[partner]: [name of holiday club]

P: [name of holiday club]

[partner]: you were singing, yes,

P: oh, that was with little [foster child] yeah, he loved that, we took [foster child] to [name of holiday club]

I: Oh yes

P: And they just, they just couldn’t, we had the week booked to go, and at first we took him in and he got in the class and he just didn’t recognise anybody, “I’m not going in there”, so we then went round and went in another few rooms and just, “nahh” “[child’s name] do you wanna go in, we’ll stay here, but do you wanna go in and spend some time?”, so I think some groups were playing football out in the back and so the group that he was gonna be in the football was gonna be in the afternoon, so in the morning it was more spending time together with about 40 youngsters which I thought was, anyway, he seemed to be ok about going before, but when we got there he just froze, no way was he going in there. So that was that, so we had the whole week, we thought he was going to be at [holiday club] all week for the five days. And now its oh what are we going to do this week, so that was a challenge. But you’ve just got to get through it, you can’t force them, and just walk off and leave them there that wouldn’t have gone down well with anybody, but yeah so [child’s name] loved it, I think because he had 1:1, someone to look after him, but he was definitely expressing stuff, whereas [child] you need someone with him. I think we had lined up somebody to be with him, but it didn’t happen, but just the frame he was in. well yeah I think he’d only been back with us a few months so he was still a bit, he’s not quite right not sort of settled and yeah, but the err, that was, that’s things happen, but things change. It could have been an absolutely brilliant week, he could have loved it but, and if he’d gone for it day by day by day, but it didn’t work, but If it had been I dunno football camp day by day he might have been different, but he just saw what he likes, and in his mind I’m not doing this so that’s it. So we just had to go with it, so we did, like, the following day the following morning we just said “remember [holiday club] is still on [child’s name] if you'd like to go”, and so we mentioned it from that day on second day, just sort of mentioned it at breakfast and he just said “nahh”, and so we went, so that was it. That’s just the way it was. And the, you say about challenging behaviour, I remember when we went to one of the first time we went to one of these first -what do you call them, up in London – these when you have the potential adopters, and it was just 50, he was number 50 there was 49 other children at this thing from babies, like weeks old babies, and [child’s name] was one of the oldest. So we’d never been before as well. And erm, so the theme was pirates, so must, even the potential adopters dress up as pirates and mermaids, it’s quite funny seeing all these adults as pirates and leaving mermaid glitter and the kids. So, we had this outfit for [child’s name] y’know and you’ve got to get the sword, so looking good. And so, the first, it was in the afternoon, so the morning was football. So the day just started off on a downer, it wasn’t a brilliant start to the day but he knew there was a lot of stuff going on that day because there’s a couple of potential adopters, and so, anyway, we’ve got breakfast, and then football gets on, we looked outside, the weather was atrocious, and I think phhh, because we challenge him, and he loved his football on a Saturday morning, so anyway, we then got the message through ‘football’s cancelled’. Oh, so he’s, so we then covered in the morning doing other things, so then we’re going to change in to his, in fact he was going to go up to London in his pirate, and he was up for it up until the day, because no football, so we just had to keep him occupied. So, we’re going up to this London to have our lunch somewhere and then go to the venue, it’s a big centre up near [location]. He wanted to keep his football kit on, and we went, “yeahhhh, ok, but everybody else is going to be in pirate outfits [child’s name], you’re going to look a bit, y’know”, and he said “no I’ll keep my football kit on”, so fair enough, he goes up and we actually went up to, low and behold he likes, occasional little treat, he likes McDonalds, I can’t stand McDonalds, but anyway he does. So there’s a McDonalds right across would you believe it right across from [train station], “oh [child’s name], are you hungry, we’re going to have some food before we go just up the road to the place”, so he’s got his football gear on, it’s a McDonalds, oh wow, shall we go to McDonalds, oh yeah yeah, good stuff. So, at McDonalds I say right, shall we change into the pirate’s outfit, so he’s finished his McDonalds, and he’s no, he would not change. So, we turn up and he’s in this football gear he’s got his boots on, but you’ve just got to go with it. These potential people this is [child’s name] mate he’s football, everybody else is in pirates and mermaids. so erm, yeah its quite comical. We’ve never been there before, so we’re at the place, and outside, luckily the rain had stopped, and its outside it has these balls and balloons and he’s picking up the balls, so a couple of the potential families started playing football with him, y’know to get to know him, which was fine, so there’s football out there and he’s got his football gear on and there’s these adults with pirates outfits, playing football – so yeah its different. But it’s just amazing that erm we did get him into his pirates outfit, because half way through the time that were spending there they have this game where they’re blowing up water bottles and the water bottles and you blow it up so there were two or three other kids the same age as him so they’re all playing together which was quite good and a lot of the other ones, the younger ones were inside, and a lot of the other families were obviously involved which was all going really well. So these water bottles were up and you pump it up and it just blow pfff 50 feet in the air, which he just, these young lads just thought this was great. Of course, they got soaking wet, there was water coming down, but fortunately, guess what we still had in the bag, the pirates outfit! “oh [child’s name] you’ve got all wet, well you canny go meet people and mix up, you’ll have to go and get changed” “oh ok” so low and behold, he’s got the pirates outfit on, and he looked the part. Y’know, because the people he had met, these potential adopters were “ahh [child’s name]! you’re looking pretty cool in your pirate” because they had noticed it as well so it’s all about eye communication so it was just, ahh I was so glad that we got him in his outfit with his little sort of rubber sword and all the rest of it. And he was ok, he was still playing football but yeah that was good. But yeah you just have to work with it, and you just have work around it, y’know you’re not upsetting anybody, the main thing is that he’s kind of taking it all. And we explained to him this is just a time to play, he didn’t quite realise, although his social worker was there and all the rest of it. That’s another situation where he’s got, the child’s got to deal with it, and you can only do the best you can to try and, because its different for him because he’s never been to one before, and we’ve never been to one either so and it’s just you have your own views about it and a lot of good stuff was done and we heard about and we saw all these lovely kids and there’s people, potential adopters there and you sort of see same-sex couples and everything and that’s another ball-game which yeah, just gotta deal with. But he came through that fine and he never he just he dealt with it and he didn’t. So, nothing came of that and so we said because a week or two afterwards if there’s any responses you would then, there would be another time to meet the couple. But it didn’t happen so, two weeks on we didn't think the other two couples, but the thing is there’s all these other children and you can, these potential adopters can put in a request for any of the other kids, so it’s pretty. They’ve got a back room there where all the kids profiles are there photographs and a bit of history and what they’ve done, so the potential adopters can see can go into this other room and look all, any children they want. Because they’ve all got name tags on and stuff, so it’s pretty, I dunno, it’s the way they’ve done it time and time again and it seems to work so you obviously go with the things and it seems to. But for [child’s name] that occasion didn’t work, for [child’s name], and we just, we give it. I don’t think we could have done anything different, but to make it just. But the strange thing was, the adopters, the family he’s into now they were supposed to be at that venue, but they couldn’t that weekend they couldn’t make it, but actually how strange is that, that would have been different, woah, who knows what would have, so it was only afterwards, because the couple had just been passed the board and that weekend they couldn’t, they’d heard about the day and they hadn’t even seen [child’s name] profile but they were going to go along, so timing just wasn’t right. And looking at it now and in hindsight, it wasn’t right for them to be there because [child’s name] wouldn’t have been able to, they couldn’t have been able to give him their focus and [child’s name] wasn’t aware of them so the timing, so we just thought wow, that could have been it, so it just worked out, and that’s the great thing about going with your gut instinct on a lot of stuff, because obviously you want the best for them, you make decisions and they’re not always right looking back. Because stuffs happening all the time, you’ve just got to give it your best shot because its new, its new for the school, its new for us, and we just, we invest, and I think for us as the carers you’re picking up, because that little child he’s coming back from that situation that Saturday and like, and you’ve just got to deal with it, like any child with any kid of post traumatic stuff you’ve got to deal with it, because you’re trying to explain because he did sort of he knew about people there that were interested and new families, forever families and that it was worded, his social worker worded it like that so there was potential;. So, he did, it came out in conversation with him, “oh is anybody, anybody want me sort of thing, for a little six-year-old, it’s blinging hard, it’s really tough for him to pick all that up, but he did. But we just had to carry on because he’s back at school he’s back to just keeping things going, back at swimming lessons, back at his football, and low and behold his social worker came to us and said there’s a couple who have seen [child’s name]’s - because we had a little video up with [child’s name]’s football and chatting and that sort of stuff, and they had seen all that and in theory this was a child who was actually a little bit older than they had earlier, because they were looking for a kid up to two years old or something, but [child’s name] is now 6, which is, so we’re told anyway is one of the older, over 5 is really difficult on the adopted scale, so we kind of knew that, and this young couple knew that but they had seen a video and that and they’d seen he was sporty and they wanted an outdoors kinda guy and they could take him out on his bike and the sporty sort of stuff and that’s what they were, so they were kinda, and same when they were looking at one or two bits, [child’s name]’s information just bounced out, and when they were looking online and stuff, it just came out. So they shared all that with us and we were talking with them and we just knew, we thought y’know what this could work, if we really erm, and so they read all the notes, they came to see us, before they even met [child’s name] they came to see us, and we showed them one or two things that we did, some of the papers the reports so nothing was hidden, they were told about this behaviour at school and this and that, so they knew all that, they took it all in, so they weren’t, stuff wasn’t hidden from them because we wanted this to work, so you’ve got to give them as much information and we shared with them and they are pretty good at asking us questions “how did you deal with this situation” and we just had to be honest with them, as well even now when they ask us questions we just say well we did this, you have maybe you need to sort of think how am I going to deal with it behaviour, but that was good.

I: Yeah, it sounds like it’s all sort of worked out really positively in the end for [child’s name] really, so that’s good.

P: Yeah in the end, we’re really, well for everybody really, so far we know things could change, but we could be, we’re all giving it our best we’re all still there and erm, y’know and it’s in relationships like [child’s name] it takes time to build relationships with him but he made relationships with one or two of our friends and even my daughter and her husband, I don’t know if my wife told you just a few weeks ago, his new family, his new mamma and papa took him down to [location] to meet my daughter and that is and we just thought wow, but he wanted it, and my daughter is well with [husband] being a social worker and she a teacher they obviously saw the potential in [child’s name] and they wanted to do the best for him, so when they said oh we’re gonna come down and visit they said “yeah! Course” so that’s all, and knowing and they saw differently, they saw how he’s now engaging with his new family and that’s priceless, you can’t put a price on that, to see that bonding, and every time we see ‘em we see that even more and more and he still loves being with us, you and I and playing with us, but you can see its getting the...and we’ve told his mama and papa that we’re speaking to them about one or two things and we’ve gone back to them said oh it’s so lovely to see you, and you can see the bonding, you can see that he just wants to be with yous and you’re doing stuff together and getting the cuddles at night and all the rest of it, because he always used to be quite, towards the male side so say towards his papa and to myself he was always quite keen to come and be more affectionate towards us and even tell us that he loves us, y’know that’s, rather than the females. I think because they say it goes back to when he was he did very rarely occasionally talk about his mum and his nan but it was never positive it was never, so it was like anti, so we had to sort of draw this out of it this sort of anti-female thing because he's at school and he’s at football, and you could see it you had to try and talk through that with him because you could see it if he played football, because for example, he wouldn’t pass the ball to any female in his team. Stuff like that you could see it and everybody notices that, so you would try and encourage him, and talk to him about it afterwards, so hence our female friends realised as well, so they would try and use tactics to try and speak to [child’s name] so when my male friends, they found no problem, he kinda latched on to his, he latched on, out for a social take him places, and some of my friends were there he would latch onto myself and my male friends, but his grudges, that’s got better and better, and that’s when we see, well his new mama now she’s telling us know she’s just getting the cuddles and just great stuff, and that’s taken a long time, but it just it does work. I mean before he was so anti-females he wouldn’t talk nicely to them, he would, so y’know and so that’s just gone, I don’t know what happened before, but obviously, maybe the way, he always seemed to be getting downed y’know by his nan, I mean I only met his nan once, twice, very, he would only say a couple of words and that was it because we were having to keep the distance we only saw them maybe coming and leaving out the contact centres, you keep away from getting involved in any kind of, unless they want it, because meetings that were all supposed to be tougher, unfortunately his nan didn’t turn up, which another story. But no, that was all part of his behaviour he’s coming with all this baggage for a little five year old and we just gradually we just started eventually taking note oh he said this he said that so [partner] and I were always continually sharing stuff, writing it down, so all that stuff was in his notes, it was in the book to school as well. We would notice something and like maybe if he’s said something, and hence his teacher and TA was the same they would do little things “oh [child’s name] had a really good day today” because they had spent time with us and that, and that real, usually usually always positive things, and he was told it was positive things. Whether he was listening to it or not, but you could say look [child’s name]. we used to get a lot of that, and hence, he was an angry young man, y’know especially angry with females, and it was not a nice, we didn’t like to see him like that, so hence want to try and do our best to bring that out of him.

I: Ok, well that sounds really helpful, yeah.

P: Well hopefully, hopefully it is.

I: No thank you it’s been lovely to hear your experiences both with [child’s name] and [child’s name] and the different experiences.

P: Totally different, but they both took a lot of work, work as in spending time with him, and that’s it, that’s the thing, giving them the time to be there to share things do things with them, and just yeah, but you want to see them coming on, that’s the main thing.

I: Yeah, lovely, ok, well thank you very much. I will stop this.