

# Foster Carer Stories

All names have been changed to protect the identity of the family

---

## Sarah, Jim and Colin's Story

---

*"In therapy we have been able to figure out with Colin how his behaviour is an expression of his early life experiences. Colin would often internalise his behaviour, believing that he was 'stupid' or a 'bad person' however he is much more able now to accept that we still love him even when he makes mistakes or his behaviour has been extreme."*

We are permanent foster carers and have been involved in the DDP model of therapy with our therapist since April 2010. The timing of sessions has always reflected the needs of Colin, our foster son now 15, with sessions increasing or decreasing as a result. For us as parents, having had the opportunity to engage in this type of therapy has been invaluable. We had previously both undertaken In-House Training in DDP principles and practices with our therapist as part of our agencies training programme and were trying to put this in to practice as best we could.

Colin's behaviour was extremely challenging from the outset and we worked tirelessly to parent him using the principles of PACE to try and support him in feeling a sense of safety and security and that he was loved and cherished no matter what. We believe that the sessions with our therapist deepened our understanding of Colin's needs and how his behaviour is the language of his early sensory memories of fear, rejection, mistrust of adults, feeling unworthy and unlovable.

# Foster Carer Stories

## Sarah, Jim and Colin's Story (continued)

This helped us to understand and accept Colin no matter what; as we increased our awareness that he was not being purposefully oppositional. This said, it has been a difficult journey and we have faced many challenges, and at times have felt like giving up, however individual support from our therapist has helped us to reflect and to again reconnect.

The sessions with Colin have also strengthened our relationships as he appeared to use therapy as a place where he would allow himself to become more vulnerable and connected to us. Over time Colin has become more regulated in himself and to accept that we are safe caring parents who he can trust. In therapy we have been able to figure out with Colin how his behaviour is an expression of his early life experiences. Colin would often internalise his behaviour, believing that he was 'stupid' or a 'bad person' however he is much more able now to accept that we still love him even when he makes mistakes or his behaviour has been extreme.

From our perspective significant progress has been made in term of Colin's emotional regulation as his sense of security and safety has increased. Colin does show signs of being more able to control his impulses, for example he is learning to 'put the brakes on' to stop behaviour from escalating; however he does this best when we or other adults are with him. Colin still finds this difficult when adults are not around and appears to need adults to keep him safe and to not act on his impulses.

Colin did regress in terms of his emotional regulation following a serious incident in April 2013; which was very sad as he was making significant progress before commencing High School in August 2012.

# Foster Carer Stories

## Sarah, Jim and Colin's Story (continued)

This reflects how fragile Colin can become under stress as he found the transition from primary school to high school extremely difficult and slowly began to emotionally dysregulate over time as his sense of safety decreased. Colin is currently settled and is again overall making good progress.

In relation to therapy we, as parents and our therapist believe that this is no longer necessary. Colin is much more able to open up and share his feelings on a day to day basis and to allow us to help him figure out what's underlying his feelings. We feel much more confident parents as a result of the input from our therapist and our increased knowledge and understanding.

We will be forever grateful to our therapist and her insight in to the effects of trauma and neglect and how it impacts on a child's life. The therapy also inspired me to pursue this model further and I have completed the DDP Level 1 and Level 2 Courses with Dan Hughes. I hope to go on to be a certified practitioner. As Colin's parent's we are both passionate about this model of working with foster and adopted children and their parents. Although parenting Colin has and continues, at times to be challenging and exhausting it has and also continues to be a joyful and rewarding experience.