

Fostering teens - Meet Jamie and Bev



Foster carer Bev, talks about when teenager Jamie came to live with them. How they all helped him overcome his early life experiences, the success that he has achieved and future aspirations :

How long has Jamie lived with you?

“Jamie has lived with us for about 5 years, since he was about 14. His mum passed away and he went through a lot of difficulties, as you would expect for anyone so young coming to terms with this situation.

Jamie’s grandma, Pauline, had the idea about the possibility of Jamie living with us.

“We met with Jamie, Pauline and the social care team to make sure what Jamie wanted. We talked with Pauline and Jamie at length to make sure that this was the right thing for Jamie and my family too. Pauline is very involved in Jamie’s life and I feel that Pauline and I are a support to each other, as well Jamie.

“Jamie is a friend of my son. My son had lost his dad about the same time that Jamie lost his mum, so they have a common a bond, as well as their friendship.

“Jamie came to live with us on my birthday – what a lovely present!

“That first day everyone was really nervous. I remember we were all running around frantically trying to get his room ready.”

Were there any challenges that you have overcome individually or together?

With everything that Jamie had been through and had to deal with, of course we had challenges to overcome.

Anti-social behaviour:

“As a way of dealing with his grief, Jamie had been committing petty crimes and was generally acting in an antisocial manner, like smashing windows. When he asked to come and live with us, he was ready to be supported by another family.

“Jamie (and me, Pauline and the family) now recognise what he went through and why. He rejected people around him because he was grieving.”

Rejecting school and education:

“He was not happy in school and would kick off so they would send him home.

“When he moved in with us, Jamie was out of school and attending an education centre Blyth – mechanics based schooling but he didn’t settle there. We all looked at other options together and he joined 'skills for you' at Cramlington – a construction based education programme. He settled down and passed the course.

For another 6 months was not sure what he wanted to do with jobs or further education, he decided that he didn’t want to do anything. He shortly realised that he needed to do something.

“Jamie joined a college course, initially a wide based construction course at the adult training centre, and has now specialised into painting and decorating. Jamie is now in his 2nd year for a level 2 diploma, he will start level 3 diploma in September.

“From losing his mum and turning his back on school, he has recently been awarded the Learner of Northumberland award for his course. His tutor was really proud and rang Jamie to say he needed to attend the awards ceremony - Jamie didn't know until he got there that he was getting this very special award.

“Currently Jamie is seeking to join an apprenticeship or work in this field.”

A shy lad:

“It took Jamie about 6 months to settle in, as he is a very shy lad.

“Not long after he came to live with us, we had a family holiday in Turkey. This was a real ice breaker for him settling into the family.”

An adjustment for everyone in the family:

“It was an adjustment with routines for everyone. Who gets into the bathroom first in the morning for a start!

“Jamie learned about our family routines and us learning about Jamie, his personality likes and dislikes.

Bev's son, Rhys, was a big part of Jamie settling. They are like brothers. They had common ground - the same anger and feelings about losing a parent.

“The key to our success as a family - talk all the time - encourage everyone to talk about things.”

What the college award means to both Bev and Jamie?

“He has dedicated his efforts and focussed on getting skills for to qualify and obtain a job.”

“He is buzzing about getting the award. He is hoping that this recognition will help him get a job / apprenticeship.”

“Now we are all enjoying the rewards and progress and changes.”

What would you like to say to people who want to help young people and how they could do this by fostering with Northumberland?

“Consider what it really means, why you want to foster. There is a lot you have to do. It's not going to be plain sailing, but the rewards are endless.

“When I've talked to some people, they were nervous about committing to a longer term foster care placement. I say don't let this put you off – there are children who need shorter term families. You can always look at doing different types of foster care at different times to suit our fostered children, you and your household.

“My supporting social worker, Jo, has been a rock. We got a wealth of support from the service too. Training helped open my eyes and gave me additional tools which helped me parenting my own children as well as Jamie. Jamie is one of the family now.

“If you are thinking about fostering, don't wait until your kids are up and away. You get a lot out of working as a foster carer. If I'd known what I know now, I would have fostered when my children were a bit younger.

“I am looking at caring for teens or disabled children when the kids move on and I have a spare room again.

“You don't have to be in a relationship. Fostering works really well, just as single parenting can work really well.”

Any other areas you or Jamie would like to talk about?

“ Only that I have no fear about Jamie being a success.”