PROFESSIONAL FOSTER PARENTS

Strategic Thoughts on Promoting Success

KEITH GORMAN

- ‘70’s Child in a Foster Family
- ‘80’s- 90’s Wall Street
- Qualifications
- 2000 Gap year – Planning Fostering Org
- ‘00’s Created #1 Fostering Organisation in UK
- 2007 Sold Company
- 2009 Wrote and produced Hell’s Pavement
- 2012 Joined Diverse Care

DEFINE THE PROBLEM

- '8,750 Foster Parent Shortage' – Tapsfield et al.
- # of Vacancies Nationwide (How much capacity do we have?)
- Retention of Families
- Quality of Families
- 1 Goal: Better experience for children in care

RECRUITMENT STANDARDS

- Raise Expectations
  - *'Academic achievement in parents is the most significant variable in predicting success in children (…) both academically and in terms of occupational prestige.'* Palmer 2009
- Do not Pander to Applicants
- Design programme to discourage weaker applicants
- Rigorous Assessment Process
- Beware of Over-recruitment

RETENTION OF FAMILIES

- Be aware of Protectionism
- Training
- Supervision
- RESPECT
- Define a Foster Parent's Career – CPD etc.

QUALITY OF FAMILIES

- Refine Recruitment Based on Experience
- Maintain High Expectations
- After 12 Months in Care
  - 18% LAC have not seen Dentist
  - 21% are behind on Immunisations
  - 50% failing to meet recommended key stages
  - DfE 2011
- Assess Ability to Adapt and Learn

LANGUAGE

- Discrimination is Enshrined in Standards:
  - Standard 26.1 ‘case files relating to foster carers’
  - 7 clauses within standard 21 encourage ‘supporting’ foster carers
- And in Practice
- Professional Hierarchy

HOW DO INDEPENDENTS MANAGE WHERE LA'S HAVE FAILED?

- Better experience for children?
- IFP child's profile
- Compare to LA profile
- Commissioning Methodology
- Accurate costing
  - LA typical cost (including staffing, HR, Legal etc) = £1,250 per week in 2006 – Fallon, PWC
  - Kent Budget = £1,249 today (not including buildings)

TECHNOLOGY

- Keep up with children
- Keep children safe
- Respect foster parents – many of them are not luddites!
- Trust technology
- Data Management
- How about referrals?

CONCLUSION

- Embrace the independent sector (selectively)
- Raise your expectations
- Respect Foster Parents as co-professionals
- Consider best match for your children in terms of accurate cost and rigorous searching
- Use evidence

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Rowe et al 1989
- Stone and Stone 1983
- Lawrence and Remy 1978
- McDonald et al 1991
- Kalland and Sinkkonen 2001
- Trasler 1961
- George 1970
- Berridge and Cleaver 1987
- Pardeck 1984
- Barth and Berry 1988
- Sallnäss (various)