



JENNY'S STORY

ENTERING CARE

A CASE STUDY



BACKGROUND

Jenny is a care leaver who spent most of her teenage years in care. She found her experience of being taken into care **life changing**. She was removed from her home by the police without any reassurance and with no knowledge of where she was going. Her first thought was that someone had died.



The police asked Jenny and her siblings several questions, some of which made Jenny feel uncomfortable. At eleven or twelve years old, questions about her sexuality left her feeling confused and as though **she'd done something wrong**. Jenny's room, belongings and the rest of her home were in disarray when she was eventually allowed to return. Some of her belongings were damaged and her diary had been read. **This felt intrusive**. It felt like she was trying to put pieces of her life back together.

After finding out that her dad had been arrested, Jenny was assigned a social worker and informed that she would be taken into respite care for a couple of weeks. She found it difficult to adjust to living with a group of people she didn't know.

“ ” It was quite hard and I maybe didn't make strong bonds because I was thinking that it wasn't permanent. That was what was getting me through. Constantly after weeks and weeks I was thinking “you'll just be here another week, it'll just be another week”.





After **four to six weeks** in foster care, Jenny was informed that her placement was permanent. Jenny found this hard to accept, especially because **it wasn't explained why**. It was especially difficult being apart from her family. She struggled with the separation from her siblings. She felt it was a 'shock to the system' as she had a close relationship with her brother and sister, and felt they had been 'ripped away'.



OUTCOMES

Jenny feels her experience could have been improved if her care placement had better reflected **her individual needs**. Jenny needed more reassurance and better communication around her transition into care. She recognises and appreciates the work of her social worker in 'fighting her corner' and trying to give Jenny everything that she needed. The efforts of both her brother's foster carer and her social worker in helping her to maintain relationships was crucial, as **these bonds proved vital** for Jenny at a time where she felt entirely **isolated and alone**.

“ I think given the situation that I was just put in a place regardless of whether it might have been the right place for me. It was kind of just a tick-box exercise – “we've found somewhere for her to go and that's where she'll go”, regardless of whether it was the right placement, or the right distance, or whether the people I was living with would be a good match.



ACTION POINTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Make sure that the transition to a new care placement is **carefully planned, managed and fully and honestly explained** to the child or young person.
- Recognise that being removed from your birth family can be **a frightening experience** – take care to **reassure the child or young person** and avoid intimidating questioning or behaviour.
- **Support** children and young people to negotiate each life transition and ensure that independent advocacy is available to support them in **expressing their views**.
- Recognise family members who are important to a child or young person, **encourage regular contact** and support the positive development of those relationships.

