



## Bob & Kym's story

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My wife and I are new into the system as foster parents. We have only been foster parents for ■ years but we can see a very flawed and biological-parents centred system that ignores the rights/needs of the child themselves.

Some specific examples are:

- \* There are no consequences for a no-show from parents at court hearings - in fact they are rewarded (the order is extended longer).
- \* The system is birth-parent centred - not child centred and definitely not looking after foster parents. (It feels like we are told: "Let the adults make the decisions and you just do your little thing of providing full time care for someone else's child and we will tell you when a decision is made").
- \* We need permission to have people stay in our house and the Department could say no. It's ridiculous and offensive as we are trusted with the care of the child but not trusted to make wise decisions on who stays in our house. We even need permission for my ■ year old parents to stay.
- \* As foster parents, we can't plan ahead as orders change, parents cancel their days etc.
- \* The Department adopts a 'good enough' parenting philosophy (for biological parents, not foster parents). This is simply not good enough.
- \* Past (and current) parenting failures are irrelevant when it comes to a new child. For our child's biological mum, she has wanted nothing to do with her first child (he is high needs). But the fact she has abandoned him is irrelevant when looking at her suitability to provide long-term care for her second child.

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\* Zero effort can be made in regards to contact and there are no consequences. eg Our boy was transported to and from contact for 2 years by a private company. The boy's biological family did the driving for 4 weeks, they complained and the private transport started again. How does this help a person understand what is needed to be a parent – one of sacrifice and time??!!

\* Zero consideration of the foster parent's lifestyle compared with the birth parent's lifestyle when it comes to contact eg our boy's biological mum has always been on the dole, we live busy lives but we have to do equal effort with contact.

\* The emotional connection between child and birth parent is irrelevant – they just have to have boxes ticked.

\* Our experience shows that birth mum knows how to play the system and this is never called out. For example, she said there was peak hour on contact day on a Saturday so she needed to have reduced time with her son. She has never worked in her life, which also demonstrates she knows how to play the system – but that is seen as irrelevant in terms of her desire and capacity to do what it takes to be a parent - ongoing and continuous sacrifice. She currently only sees her son once a fortnight for 5 hours. You would think if she was serious about reunification, she would want to spend as much time with her son and not use 'peak hour' as an excuse to reduce the hours.

\* We had extensive safety checks on us personally and on our house before we could start fostering. Some of these checks were ridiculous. For example, eg there was concern over [REDACTED] being toppled over by a [REDACTED] year old. Yet there are no procedures to determine the suitability of birth parents' current living arrangements when the child goes to visit eg No one from the Department ever went to see the accommodation of bio mum and new partner located [REDACTED] hours away; bio dad has 2 big, ferocious dogs that need to be tied up so they don't attack people but this was only discovered months after our boy was having contact with him at that house.