



## Lesley & Howard's story

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My name is Lesley. My husband Howard and I fostered around 30 children from 1995 to 2018. We could not have our own children and were passionate about child safety. I was lucky enough to have come from a loving and safe home with 2 parents.

An [REDACTED]-old baby came into our care. She is one of the very few that was not shuffled from foster home to foster home and stayed with us until she was about 20.

In [REDACTED] a [REDACTED]-year-old child came into our care, the reason was claims of sexual abuse. Child A acted out sexually to all of us, which I reported to DOCS. Before her 2-year order was up, she was sent home gradually one day a week, 2 days a week etc. She would tell us what her stepfather (now convicted pedophile) was doing to her.

We told DOCS and they decided to send Child A home permanently. We were horrified and worried sick. We went to the police who were also horrified. They also interviewed our other [REDACTED] foster children. The police removed her, but DOCS returned her back to mum and step-father.

After taking this to the Children's Tribunal, we learnt that the step-father also got his sister pregnant. To cut a long story short, our foster child was moved to another foster home (after being

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with her mother and convicted pedophile or 4 months). It was then decided by the Children's Tribunal for her to return to us. She had nightmares for about 2 years. Our other foster children felt insecure and worried they would be sent home. No one has ever apologized. Because of us [the stepfather] was sentenced to 5 years in jail.

Once she had turned 18, she successfully sued Department of Child Safety. Since this happened, we have never taken on any more foster children. We are good, decent people. We had to keep fostering until she turned 18, and my rule was to have nothing to do with all those that sent her home.