

CHILDREN'S QUALITY ASSURANCE ITEM 9
PANEL
29 NOVEMBER 1999

Jane (Born 3.87)

Jane is subject of a full care order which was made in October 1995. There had previously been long involvement with the family because of concerns about Jane's failure to thrive and non-accidental injuries. Due to the concerns, Jane's name was placed on and off the child protection register for physical injury, emotional abuse and neglect.

Jane had 9 episodes of foster care before care proceedings were instigated. They are as follows:

11.01.93 - 15.01.93: Accommodated with foster cares due to N.A.I

15.01.93 - 01.03.93: Accommodated with foster carers

01.03.93 - July 1993: Accommodated with foster carers

July 1993 – January 1994: Jane then returned to her parents care.

January 1994: Jane had a planned respite care episode due to concerns about her welfare and behaviour at home.

01.02.94 -18.02.94: Jane was accommodated for respite in three foster placements as her mother had to go into hospital for a minor operation. One placement ended as Jane claimed that the foster carer had smacked her.

03.03.95 - 20.03.95: Jane was accommodated for respite in two different foster placements as Jane's mother was in hospital to for the birth of a baby.

Jane returned home during the care proceedings until a therapeutic resource was identified and which Jane moved to on 27 October 1995. Jane remained at this resource until she moved to a long term 'turn around' foster placement in May 1999. The resource cost for this period was £250,000. This was one third joint funded by education up until March 1997.

It soon became evident that the level of Jane's emotional needs were not going to be compatible with 'normal' family living and she struggled in making adjustments to a new way of life. Efforts to sustain the placement were not successful and it disrupted in November. Jane is currently living in a crisis intervention residential resource at a cost of £2,500 a week.

Jane needs a long term residential home where her social, emotional and educational needs can be met through to young adulthood. It is likely that such provision will cost in the region of £2,000 per week.

Issues arising from the case of Jane.

1. It is clear with the benefit of hindsight that early intervention with this family should have identified that in the longer term, it was unlikely that her parents could meet her needs. In the current climate, this would in all likelihood have led to care proceedings being initiated at an earlier stage, and an adoptive placement sought.
2. By the time proceedings were initiated, Jane's behaviour was demonstrating some considerable emotional damage, and placement for adoption was not a possibility.
3. Her behaviour at the therapeutic resource improved to the point where there was some confidence that she would benefit from a family placement. However, later experience seems to show that there are some children who are unable to cope with family life.
4. The cost of such placements is very high, in this case in excess of £100,000 per annum. This would contrast with the cost of an adoption placement, even with a high adoption allowance of c£5,000 per annum. This also illustrates how earlier decisions can have a long term impact over a number of years.

Paul Sutton
Head of Children's Services.