

Craig – Background Information

Craig's mother Jacqui was the only child of John and Sheila. Jacqui's early childhood was happy but in her early teens her father suffered a serious accident at work (he was employed in the building trade). As a result of the accident he was unable to work again and the injury affected his personality, he became depressed and at times aggressive and began to drink heavily. Jacqui's mother found it hard to cope with an adolescent daughter and her husband and she too began to use alcohol. Jacqui's reaction to the situation was to spend less time in the home and more time with her friends. Her school attendance became irregular and she began to "experiment" with alcohol and drugs. Jacqui left school with no qualifications and drifted from on temporary job to another. In Jacqui's early 20's her father died and although in latter years he and Jacqui had not got on she had as a little girl had a very strong and positive relationship with him and the loss affected her deeply. Her mother had begun receiving some help for her depression and misuse of alcohol and the two of them supported each other in their grief.

At this time Jacqui had a brief relationship with Phil and conceived Craig. The relationship however was short lived and by the time Craig was born the couple had separated. Jacqui and Craig continued to live with her mother until Jacqui met and moved into a flat with Dougie.

The period that Jacqui and Craig spent at her mothers has a happy time and Sheila enjoyed the experience of being a grandmother.

The relationship with Dougie was initially happy and Craig grew up knowing him as a Dad. However Dougie's use of alcohol led to incidents of domestic violence witnessed by Craig and assaults on Craig. At the age of 4 as a result of an assault by Dougie on Jacqui, Craig was placed with his grandmother whilst his mother received treatment. However although this placement met Craig's immediate needs it was clear that his grandmother had again become depressed and was in a fragile state (There were concerns about the use of alcohol).

When Jacqui became ill as a result of an overdose the social work department did not feel that Craig's grandmother would be able to provide safe care so he was placed with foster carers – Bob and Elaine.

Bob and Elaine were experienced foster carers and although Craig was very loyal to his mother they realised that he was a little boy who had experienced a lot of uncertainty, had had variable physical care from both mother and grandmother and had quite an 'anxious' attachment to his mother. With Bob and Elaine Craig began to relax and the consistent care and stimulation he received enabled him to start school positively. His mother received support with her alcohol and drug misuse and both she and her mother were able to maintain contact with Craig. Dougie had left the scene by this time.

After a period with Bob and Elaine, Craig was rehabilitated home to live with his mother and grandmother. This involved a change in school which Craig found hard but good liaison between foster carers and the two schools made this as smooth as could be. Although Craig was quite a bright little boy he struggled with his reading and writing though did quite well in his early number work.

Craig continued to live with his mother and grandmother until he was 10. Conditions were never wholly satisfactory but the quality of relationship between Craig and his mother was positive and Jacqui and Sheila supported each other. The Social Work Department remained involved with the family throughout Craig's childhood. Sheila died suddenly of stomach cancer when Craig was 10. He and his mother were devastated and his mother deprived of Sheila's support began to use drugs and alcohol quite heavily.

Craig began to "take responsibility" for his mother, worrying about her and feeling anxious about leaving her to go to school. His work deteriorated and he began to fall seriously behind his peers. Eventually he stopped attending altogether and it was discovered that his mother was failing to provide food or clothing for him. There was concern that he was being exposed to adults using drugs. As a consequence of these concerns Craig was accommodated with Sandra and Jim just after his eleventh birthday. It was felt important to maintain Craig at his existing school until the transition to secondary school which meant that he had to travel everyday. In the meantime help was offered to Jacqui with her drug and alcohol misuse. Contact was intermittent between Jacqui and Craig and then Jacqui met Batchie just after Craig moved to secondary school. He was someone she had known as a youngster. The relationship proved to be a positive one for Jacqui. She became pregnant and Batchie proved to be an interested father. However he was reluctant to accept Craig into the family and this made it difficult for Jacqui to maintain her links with Craig, feeling guilty about this she drifted to the margins of Craig's life. Craig reacted strongly to this and began to seek comfort with groups of 'mates' and use alcohol.

This caused major anxieties to the foster carers who eventually felt unable to take responsibility for Craig's behaviour as he moved into a pattern of not going to school /abusing alcohol.

An emergency admission to residential care became a permanent placement

Despite early difficulties with both school and the placement Craig's move to residential care was a positive one and with the support he received at school and in the unit he was able to "make sense" of what had happened to him and to his mother. The relationship between Jacqui and Batchie ultimately broke down and whilst Craig had the possibility of returning home, contact between him and his mother indicated that this probably would not be possible. Craig could become angry with his mother for rejecting him and she found it hard to 'manage' an adolescent boy. Arguments and recriminations were an inevitable part of their contact. Jacqui with support proved to be a "good enough" mother to her daughter and managed to take on a part time job. There remained concerns however that she was still

vulnerable to exploitation by male partners and to misusing drugs and alcohol. There have been a number of child protection referrals in relation to her care of her daughter. Despite his understandable anxieties about what was happening at home, Craig managed to achieve sufficiently well at school to get a place on a music HNC at college. The support from his guidance teacher and the targeted help of a home link teacher allowed him to deal with his literacy problems. His social worker arranged for him to have guitar lessons and he became quite a talented performer and has begun to write his own songs.