

Social Work Department

Children's Group, Session 1

Meeting held at 150 Haddington Crescent
on Thursday 3 May from 6.30p.m. - 7.30p.m.

Group Leaders : Audrey Salter, homefinder
Wendy Grant, social worker.

Audrey Salter's took responsibility for 'managing' the meeting, and Wendy Grant's role was to help the children express their views and to take note on the feeling content of the meeting.

Children present : [REDACTED]
Tommy Tarbett (10)
Lisa Tarbett (9)
[REDACTED]

Programme for meeting :

- 1) Introductory activity of making a poster with the letters of their names.
- 2) Children to complete 'book about me', giving more personal information, their likes and dislikes, and places they are currently living.

Achievement of Group Tasks

Goals of the session were -

- (1) Help the children to get involved in the group.
- (2) Enable group members to be able to know each other.
- (3) To allow the children to begin thinking of different kinds of growing up environments., e.g. children's homes; foster homes and families.

On this first evening the introductory activity took a little longer than expected. The reasons for this being that all four children at first appeared to be feeling, quite naturally, apprehensive, which was noted in the manner in which the first five minutes or so they gave total concentration to cutting their initials from coloured paper, rarely lifting their eyes from the job in hand. However, as they settled, apprehensions began to disperse with Audrey Cosgrove chatting to Tommy and Lisa about Carolina House and [REDACTED] having spent some time at Carolina House himself, trying to engage in discussion, finding a common bond between them. Tommy later offered to help [REDACTED] complete his poster and by the time the posters were complete and hung on the walls, the atmosphere had certainly relaxed. Therefore, I feel for the first session the extra time spent on the activities was possibly justified in that goals (a) and (b) were achieved very successfully.

The above curtailed the work on their 'book about me' and the discussion that followed, the content of which is detailed in the following individual profiles :-

Children's Group, Session 1 (cont'd):Tommy:

Tommy and Lisa arrived together accompanied by their social worker and key worker from Carolina House. On arrival, although initially slightly apprehensive he appeared to settle quickly and seemed very accepting of joining the group. Tommy appeared to have a constant smile on his face, with his eyes giving over an element of devilment and mischief. Tommy worked competently and enthusiastically on his 'book about me' and seemed to enjoy the challenge offered by this. The following information emerged :

- (1) Best friend - Neil Duncan.
- (2) Favourite colour - Tangerine.
- (3) Favourite activities - Talk; play football; cycle; run; knit; watch T.V.; eat; cook; play cards.
- (4) Feeling of being happy or sad - Tommy indicated that he feels happy when playing or watching football, but sad when he has to go to school.
- (5) Things to take on a Desert Island - Record : Paul Young.
T.V. Programme: Sportscentre.
Person : Neil Duncan.

Current living situation :

Tommy stated that he liked being at Carolina House as he has lots of friends and there is 'nothing he does not like about it'. He does not know how long he wishes to continue living there.

Tommy was consistent throughout the meeting on his feelings about living at Carolina House and seemed fairly happy and settled with his current situation.

Children's Group, Session 1 (cont'd):

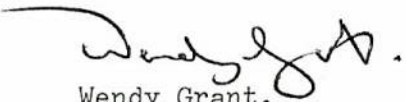
Concluding Activity :

We finished the session by telling the children about choosing foster homes, and discussing their ideas on fostering. Everyone enjoyed the coke and biscuits.

Summary:

In general it is the opinion of both leaders that this first meeting proved to be fairly successful in terms of 'everyone getting to know eachother'. All, apart from [REDACTED] appeared quite happy about attending and worked well on given tasks. The 'work' element in tonight's meeting was somewhat limited and without much depth, however, the children appeared to have been given the opportunity to think about themselves and different types of growing up environments.

At this stage perhaps it is significant to note that both Tommy and Lisa displayed an open acceptance of living at Carolina House, whereas both [REDACTED] very forcefully stated that they did not like their current living situation.


Wendy Grant,
Social Worker.

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WG/JW

Childrens Group, Session 2

Meeting held at 150 Haddington Crescent, Whitfield, Dundee

on Thursday, 10th May, 1984 from 6.30pm - 7.30pm.

Group Leaders: Audrey Salters, Instrumental Leader.
Wendy Grant, Expressive Leader.

Children Present: [REDACTED] (9),
Tommy Tarbett, (10),
Lisa Tarbett, (9),
[REDACTED] (9)

Programme for the Meeting

1. Introducing activity, pasting cut out figures of men, women, boys, girls and babies on to individual posters. The purpose of this was to allow the children to begin thinking about 'families'.
2. Brainstorming session where the children were asked to list collectively their view about the information needed about a family before they would be considered as prospective foster home.
3. Outline information by Audrey Salters of the actual requirements of the vetting process of foster parents.
4. Children given the task to complete checklist book 'what to tell about me' indicating what information they felt prospective foster parents need to know and whether or not they felt 'happy' or 'safe' for this information to be passed on

Achievement of Group Tasks

Goals for the Session were:-

- (a) To give the children an opportunity to discuss and share their views on the qualities desirable in foster parents. Furthermore, to share their ideas and feelings about how foster parents/homes are found.
- (b) To give factual information about the reality of the homefinding process.
- (c) To help the children begin to consider from both adult/child prospectus some of the information needed when a child is introduced to a 'new family'.

Prior to the start of this evening's session, the Social Workers accompanying the children were given the opportunity to share with them some of the projects undertaken during the last meeting. All children appeared pleased to share their 'work' resulting in a very happy relaxed atmosphere at the beginning of the meeting.

The introductory activity of making a poster of a 'chosen pretend family' was well received by everyone. It gave the opportunity for the children to begin 'chatting' and created much rivalry to get the best cut out figures for their own personal choice, i.e. 'nicest looking mum', 'boy with a football', 'nice baby'. Although it was not stressed that the children chose families where/

Childrens Group, Session 2, (Cont'd)

where they would personally like to stay, it was undertaken fairly seriously and certainly opened up thinking on 'families'.

In the brainstorming session on information needed about prospective foster parents, the children all responded well to suggestions that they were to pretend to do their Social Workers job for a day and think about questions they would wish to ask prospective foster parents. The comments forthcoming from the individual children were generally quickfiring but thoughtful, which brought to light the childrens awareness of the positive and negative attitudes displayed by parental figures. Much of their discussion and comments appeared to stem from personal experiences of 'family life' and a need to be reassured that they would be safe and secure:-

1. What age foster parents are?
2. What they look like?
3. Whether they would be nice?
4. Where they live?
5. What jobs they do, as a hard job might make demands, therefore, have no time to look after children?
6. Do they drink too much? Many comments on this which will be brought to light in individual profiles.
7. Would they be strict and punishments be cruel, i.e. become angry, and shout, hit, put you out of the house, put you to bed early, stop pocket money? However, brief discussion initiated some agreement that children should not always have their own way and such punishments as reduction of pocket money/early bed may be appropriate.
8. The children were asked their feelings on whether they felt it important to know of foster parents financial situation, i.e. rich or poor. Tommy thought somewhere in the middle, i.e. 'halfy-halfy'.
9. Do they have children of their own. Some fears expressed about being bullied by older children.
10. Do they have pets, i.e. dog, cat, goldfish?
11. Would they want to keep you forever?
12. Could you leave when you were older?

Audrey's task of giving information about the reality of the homefinding progress was difficult to explain even with the aid of a poster. During this part of the session the children became a little restless and began laughing at the drawing on the poster and quite intentionally on seeing that he was gaining the attention of the other children, became louder and louder, creating quite a disruption. Lisa in particular, joined in his 'fits of giggles' and the noise level was such that it made Audrey's job almost impossible in trying to keep minimal attention. However, it would seem that even [redacted] appeared to grasp the basis of the process, i.e. police checks, housing, medical which was related to earlier questions and will be brought out in individual profiles.

The final part of the session was introduced by the writer and the children asked to complete their book on 'what to tell about me'. This again helped the children to think again about their own behaviour and needs and what information foster parents should or should not be told about them. This gave/

Childrens Group, Session 2, (Cont'd).

gave opportunity for the children to think about the process from their own point of view and that of an adult prospectus. Given that time was very short the questions rather difficult to come to grips with in such a short time, they all seemed to make the most of their own anxieties: outcome described in profiles.

Childrens Group, Session 2, (Cont'd).

Tommy - Personal Profile.

Tommy arrived with Lisa in good time for the meeting, seeming relaxed and happy, and immediately going to sit beside [REDACTED]. He carefully avoided answering some enquiries as to how he had acquired a rather colourful 'black eye'.

In general, Tommy's contribution to the group was high and he displayed the ability to concentrate and give thoughtful answers, at times relating his comments to his own situation and thoughts on the future.

Tommy enjoyed the pasting activity and immediately identified himself with a boy holding a football, building a family around him, including his sister and brother. He did check later with Lisa to ensure she had included him in her 'pretend family'.

In the Brainstorming Session Tommy opened up the discussion saying that it is important to know what age foster parents are, although no chance to expand, due to comments being put forward by other children. He also stated that their 'type of job' was important and gave some thought to the fact that a demanding job might mean adults having less time to look after children. On the subject of drinking too much Tommy said that when 'people are drunk they come and pull you out of bed! While discussing foster parents natural children, Tommy made it clear that he did not wish any other children in the family. This statement was qualified by saying that he would wish Lisa with him, but fears that older children may bully him. On the question of where foster parents should live, Tommy felt it would be appropriate they stayed beside 'Mayfield' as it would be near his dad and his friends.

During Audrey's presentation on the vetting process of foster parents, Tommy appeared surprised by the fact that 'houses' have to be checked. The explanation was given for this and he appeared to understand that the Social Worker has to seek permission from the Council to ensure the family have enough room. He said he would like a room to himself.

Tommy worked his way through his checklist book fairly competently putting stars in the boxes he felt appropriate.

Things he felt Foster Parents would need to know and wants to tell are as follows:-

1. What I look like?
2. My favourite food?
3. Favourite hobbies?
4. Where I live?
5. Birthday?
6. What school I go to?
7. If I have brothers or sisters?
8. If I have bad moods?
9. Why I am in Care?
10. What I like for breakfast?
11. If I have visits from my family?

Things/

7.

Childrens Group, Session 2, (Cont'd)

Tommy - Personal Profile, (Cont'd)

Things that they would need to know but did not feel it important to tell:-

1. Where I was born?
2. I like sharing a bedroom?
3. I have tantrums?

Things that he would rather not tell:-

1. I swear.

11.

Childrens Group, Session 2, (Cont'd)

Concluding Activity

We finished the session with the children being joined by both residential and fieldworkers, giving opportunity to informally discuss the evening's activities. Everyone enjoyed coke and biscuits and left in very light hearted frame of mind.

Summary

It is the opinion of both leaders that this meeting met with some success in not only giving factual information about processing the application and vetting of foster parents, but allowed the children to begin thinking about joining 'new families'.

Perhaps equally important this meeting brought to light some of the very real fears about 'standards of parenting' some of the comments being shared based on the children's personal experiences.


Miss W. Grant,
Social Worker.

CHILDRENS GROUP - SESSION 3

Meeting held at 150 Haddington Crescent, Whitfield, Dundee
on Thursday, 17th May, 1984 from 6.30pm - 7.30pm.

Group Leaders: Audrey Salters, Instrumental Leader.
Wendy Grant - Expressive Leader.

Children Present [REDACTED]
Tommy Tarbett,
Lisa Tarbett,
[REDACTED]



Programme for the Meeting

1. Introductory activity - playdoh, using a variety of biscuit cutters.
2. Discussion of different aspects of the parenting role and the way this can be divided using Vera Fahlbergs distinction between Legal Parent, Birth Parent and Parenting Parent. ("Helping Children when they must move" - Page 19).
3. Board game based on Ludo/Monopoly in which children landing on squares marked Birth Parent, Legal Parent, Care Parent had to answer questions relating to the roles of these parent figures and their feelings about them.
4. Coke and Biscuits.

Achievement of Group Tasks

Goals for the Session:-

1. To give the children a framework for understanding how and why the parental role might be divided.
2. To give an opportunity for the children to discuss their feelings about maintaining contact with parental figures "from the past" and to consider ways of doing this.

The introductory activity using playdoh was well received by all the children. They used it in such a way that it encouraged discussion by swapping ideas as how to make certain shapes and 'models'. On clearing up this session, the children became rather 'high' with [REDACTED] using the opportunity to show off, threatening to throw a lump of playdoh at Lisa. This general excitement continued while the children were washing their hands with Tommy demonstrating his skills in whipping the towel around the legs of others! However, all the children seemed happy and relaxed and there was a noticeable difference in that the children seemed much more 'safe' with each other.

During Audrey's introduction on parental roles, (2), the children seemed to settle down and were all fairly attentive in looking at the three separate 'cut out' figures, stating the different tasks and responsibilities of a 'parent' and how in certain circumstances these roles may have to be divided and shared.

On seeing the board game all the children appeared eager to participate, but unfortunately, the novelty of the game appeared to overtake the purpose. The children's concentration and interest lasted throughout the activity, but their answers to the questions on the cards was limited as there was a general impatience and competitiveness to win the game.

Children's Group - Session 3 Cont'd

Individual Profile

Tommy

On arrival, Tommy seemed happy and immediately sat down beside [REDACTED] and began chatting. He decided to make a football player with the playdoh and was helped by Lisa in making the eyes and nose. With [REDACTED] guidance Tommy went on to make a 'monster' and although obviously enjoying this period of play, he was anxious to find out the programme for the evening.

Generally, Tommy portrayed a more outgoing side to his personality becoming quite confident and making jokes about Lisa resembling the shape of the cut-out figures! However, although [REDACTED] took the opportunity in joining in this 'laughter', his comment got little response from everyone else and he soon settled down and listened fairly attentively to the introduction on the roles of 'parents'.

During the 'parenting ludo' game, he too appeared to get caught in the process and rivalry of the game rather than the purpose, resulting in his contribution to the discussion being rather limited.

At this stage it is clear that Tommy still views his father as the most important person in his life and looks towards him as the adult who would make decisions on his behalf. He appears very accepting of his current living situation at Carolina House, and so far has shown no real indication of a need or wish to move to a 'new family'.

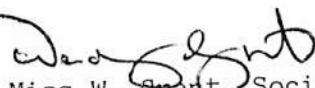
His understanding of family placement seems to be very remote and it seems unlikely that he has really thought about the relevance to him.

Children's Group - Session 3, Cont'd

Summary

This evening's meeting proved rather disappointing in as much as it is felt by both leaders that although the children were given the opportunity to think about the presenting facts on 'parenting roles', there was little indepth discussion reached by using the method of the game.

The main factors contributing to this outcome appears to be that the children were so anxious to 'play the game' that the serious purpose behind the game was lost. Secondly, the question cards used in the game had been originally compiled for a previous group of children and the direction of the questions were less relevant for the particular group. Finally, I feel that my own contribution to this evening's meeting was very limited and I was struggling in helping the children express their views.


Miss W. Grant, Social Worker.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION DURING "PARENTING LUDO"

QUESTION		TOMMY	LISA	
If you didn't see your Birth Parents, what would be a good way to remember them. 1. Photographs. 2. Talk about them. 3. Think about them.		Tommy also thought a photograph would be a good way to remember someone.		
What would you call your care parents. 1. Mum and Dad. 2. Aunt and Uncle. 3. Mr and Mrs. 4. By their first names		Tommy thought that it would be inappropriate to refer to care parents as Mum and Dad and suggested Aunt and Uncle as being more appropriate.	Lisa felt as Tommy it would be better to call care parents Aunt and Uncle.	
What do you think is the most important thing about the person who cares for you. 1. The way they look. 2. What they think about you. 3. How much money they have. 4. The kind of punishment they choose.		Tommy gave quite a lot of thought to this and stated that he felt the way people think about you is the most important.	Lisa without much thought stated that money would be the most important thing.	

QUESTION		TOMMY	LISA	
Who do you think is the nicest person in your family?				
What do you like least about your caring parent?				
If the person looking after you wants to adopt you, whose permission must he get?		Tommy thought that you must ask the social worker's permission.		

CHILDREN GROUP - SESSION 4

Meeting held at 150 Haddington Crescent, Whitfield, Dundee
on Thursday 31st May 1984
6.30 pm - 7.30 pm

Group Leaders: Audrey Salters, Instrumental Leader
Wendy Grant, Expressive Leader

Children Present: [REDACTED]
Tommy Tarbett
Lisa Tarbett
[REDACTED]

Programme for the Meeting

1. Introductory activity, where the children were asked to choose two picture cards and use their imagination to tell a brief story about the reasons why they feel the cards are linked in some way.
2. Short story re child being introduced to foster parents where children were given the opportunity to verbally give adjectives describing the child's feelings about the process (see attached).
3. Study and discussion of selected cartoons from "getting to know you" (without captions).
4. Children were given paper shields with headings, asking them to note personal details about themselves. This was given to the children at the end of the meeting to complete with their social workers at a later date.
5. Coke and biscuits.

Achievement of Group Tasks

Goals for the meeting were:-

- (a) To provide an opportunity for the children to express their feelings about the introductory process.
- (b) To share information about normal reactions to new situations and meeting new people.
- (c) To explain some of the feelings of those involved in the adjustment process where older children are placed in new families.

The start of this evening's activities began very well with the children all enjoying a game where they were asked to pick two picture cards and use their imagination to tell a story about how the two go together.

On moving onto the main task of the evening, ie. The "story of a child being introduced to foster parents", [REDACTED] and Tommy because very restless and began disrupting the group. It proved very difficult to keep the group to task, resulting in the session being rather "piece meal" and a great deal of effort was needed to regain control of the situation. Apart from [REDACTED] who completely opted out, the children did contribute words describing feelings of such a move. However it would seem that in the main the children related the words to the story and did not necessarily relate it to personal feelings as to how they may feel in a similar situation. Please see attached.

Achievement of Group Tasks, (cont'd)

On looking at the drawings from "getting to know you" the children appeared in general to view the "light hearted" aspects of the pictures. They all managed to give some description of how they felt the characters in the pictures were portrayed which allowed some brief discussion on adult/child relationship.

On bringing the meeting to a close, the children were reminded that this had been the final session. Some questions presented, ie. "Would they be coming back?" "What they would now do on a Thursday night?" and [REDACTED] enquired as to "whether they would all just be fostered now". The children were given their paper shields and it was explained that although they would not be returning to the group, they could complete their shields with their own social workers and discussion on fostering would continue between them.

The children all enjoyed coke and biscuits and on return of their social workers, had their photographs taken. All kept in a very cheerful manner, taking with them the work completed during the course of meetings.

Tommy:

Tommy ran into the room tonight and appeared to be in a very 'loud' and 'cheerful' mood, making his presence known to everyone. As usual, he sat beside [REDACTED] and appeared to enjoy taking part in the card game. During this activity, Tommy again showed that he has a quick, thoughtful mind and used his imagination well in describing the reasons for choosing his cards.

On beginning the 'work' of the evening, Tommy became involved in a 'carry-on' with [REDACTED] and the boys eventually had to be separated. For a short while he then turned his attentions to Lisa by prodding, pushing and calling her names. However, despite the fact that he obviously enjoys teasing her, they appear very close and while this banter was going on between them, he did display more an element of 'fun' rather than trying to hurt or upset her.

This obviously detracted from Tommy giving his full attention to the 'story on fostering'. He managed at the beginning, to give some thoughtful answers and then appeared to continue in a manner which lent itself more to 'making up a story' than seriously considering the facts presented. Despite this, he seemed to become aware that [REDACTED] contained both fear and pleasure and generally seemed to grasp the elements involved in such a move.

Like the other children, Tommy viewed the cartoon pictures in a rather light-handed manner, but he did comment on his own pictures, and listen to the descriptions other children gave of theirs.

Summary:

During the four sessions, Tommy has presented as a cheerful, articulate boy who in more recent meetings has shown that he enjoys a degree of 'devilment'. Although generally he has been seen as a high participant, quite freely entering into discussion on the subject matter, Tommy seems unable or unwilling to relate matters around 'fostering' to himself.

It is the opinion of both leaders that Tommy seems to find it impossible to consider fostering at all realistically as it relates to himself. He does not appear to have considered that he may move from Carolina House in the future and clearly identifies this as his 'home base' with his father and grandmother being the important adjoining links with other family members.