

Befriending a Child: a Befriender's View



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"I was introduced to Befriend A Child via an advert on TV. The advert asked if you had two hours every second week that you could spare to help children in the Aberdeen area who were less fortunate than most. I remember thinking quite a lot about whether or not I would approach the organisation and offer my help. It was a bit like stepping into the unknown and I was afraid that I would not make the grade.

My biggest fear was that I would not be able, as a single woman, to deal with a child who had emotional problems and that I might end up letting them down.

After the initial visit, chatting with the team, I felt much more positive about what I had to offer. I was amazed at how during this informal chat I discovered how the smallest things I could offer might impact on a young child's life. I was extremely excited about my potential match and could not wait to meet my 'little person'.

In October, after I'd completed my training and all checks were in place, 'C' came into my life. I remember it as if it were yesterday. He was four, had amazing blonde white hair, big blue eyes and wore a grey puffer jacket. He was extremely cautious but desperate to go out and have a good time. He had never been in a car before (or not that he could remember) and he was so excited. He loved the colour of my car and the fact that he could put the windows up and down at the

touch of a button (still one of his favourite tasks yet!). He especially liked the fact that he had his very own 'special' seat in the car.

Our first outing was simply going to the park and playing on the swings. He was delighted that I wanted to go on the swings with him and that I would race him from tree to tree – a game that he often asked for during our first couple of years together. He thought it was strange that an adult would play like a child with him – but not to me, it was natural.

'C' and I have met every second weekend since that day and I'm not sure which one of us gets more out of it. It took only a short period of time for me to realise that I was getting as much out of the befriending relationship as 'C' was. We go swimming, bake cakes, visit castles, go on death slides and swings, walk the dogs, have picnics on the beach, go to see childrens' films (which I'm now addicted to) scream our heads off and feel sick at the carnivals. 'C's secret pleasure is getting me on the front of the water slide, so that I am the one who is soaked.

We also have quiet times together, during rainy or cold days, where we simply 'hang out.' We have a scrapbook that we keep to remind us of our time together and we watch videos, draw, use the PC and just simply be.

This to me is the biggest pleasure of all, the fact that 'C' is happy just being with me. I've watched him grow into an exceptionally kind

young lad who loves animals and young children. He is selfless and considerate and very well-mannered.

It has been a joy to have him in my life and as he grows older I hope that he will continue to want to have contact with me. He has had an extremely positive impact on my life and I simply could not imagine what the last 6 years would have been like without him. We both have a lot to thank Befriend A Child for."

About Befriend a Child

Befriend A Child recruits caring adults to befriend and support individual children on a 1:1 basis. In doing so these volunteers help to promote the children's welfare and advance their education. The children range in age between 5 – 12 at the time of their referral and live in Aberdeen City. Many of the children referred to the Organisation are amongst the most vulnerable, deprived and needy within our community. Referrals are accepted (with the child and parents' permission) from statutory agencies within Aberdeen City e.g. the Social Work Dept, Educational Psychologists and Health Visitors.

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