

Foster carer expresses outrage about forced adoption of baby (January 2013)

I was approved as a local authority foster carer about 18 months ago, and during that time, have had one placement which lasted 14 months and ended at the end of November last year.

As a naive first time foster carer, I genuinely believed that I was going to be doing some good and helping a child at risk, and when social services brought me a 5 day old baby boy, I initially hardly gave his parents a second thought. After all, he must have been taken into care for a good reason, surely? BUT, within minutes of him being in my house, my thoughts started to change. The baby's birth mother had sent the most poignant letter thanking me for looking after her son, and asking me to use certain products in his care etc. I immediately felt that this young mum loved her baby.

I asked the social workers who brought him why he was to be fostered but was just told then that he "was at risk of neglect". I did not question it at that time. To cut a very long story short, I came into contact on a regular basis with baby's mum and other family members, and it became very clear that the baby was loved and wanted by everyone. The mum was not a criminal, addict, alcoholic etc, but she was vulnerable and had been in a violent relationship and became homeless. All she needed was some practical help and support to be able to care for her own baby.

Baby's paternal grandmother also stepped up and offered to permanently care for him if necessary, but she was given a "negative assessment" by baby's S.W. much to her surprise (and mine!). When I asked why this was, I was given very vague and spurious reasons for this decision. I even asked grandma directly, and she was obviously at a loss and very upset as to why this decision was made. She said it was because of an "incident of violence" involving her older son some years previously. The son in question no longer even lived with her.

The mum fought in court for her baby but to no avail as she had no proper advice or support whatsoever. Even her solicitor told her to "go along with social workers"! After 14 months with me, baby was eventually adopted. Not only was his mother devastated, so was I. The bridging process lasted one week and then he was taken from me abruptly to go and live with strangers. He was so distressed! So many broken hearts. It's barbaric and inhuman! This has to stop but how???