



FOSTER CARE ASSOCIATES

CMI DIPLOMA IN LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Foster Care Associates

- Approx 900 staff in c.80 locations across the UK
- Turnover approx £130 million
- Provides quality foster care in a family setting for children and young people, with the aim of making a positive and lasting difference to their lives

CMI Level 5 Diploma

- 16 managers from around the UK
- 13 taught days delivered over 18 months
- 7 written work-based assignments and an in-house project

Result

- 6 service improvement projects delivered
- Increased confidence in challenging difficult situations and poor performance
- Understanding of how effective management underpins good practice



Foster Care Associates is a UK-wide independent fostering organisation providing high quality family placements at a local level. FCA has pioneered a model of care called 'Team Parenting', which draws on the expertise of a multi-disciplinary team to support foster parents, leading to better outcomes for even the most 'difficult to place' children and young people. Education plays a vital role in the success of this approach, with a wide range of learning and development opportunities provided for employees, carers and children and young people alike.



The support from Croft has been top drawer throughout. They really understand our business



David Ross

Identifying tomorrow's leaders

FCA's relationship with Croft Management began with a succession planning issue. David Ross, head of learning and development, recalls that several key staff were due to leave over the next few years, and FCA was looking for a way to identify the leaders of tomorrow. "We considered a number of providers," he explains, "and Croft impressed us by really engaging with the issues we needed to solve. They also had excellent references from other customers. Our first impressions were absolutely

spot on - Croft made sure they familiarised themselves with our organisation, and all the trainers had a good knowledge of the business too. They came to each session so well prepared that it felt like each unit had been developed with FCA and its core values at the centre. They really did make a lot of effort to make it work for us, and their administrative support has been consistently excellent."

Rising to the challenge

Several delegates have already been promoted since studying the programme. One of these is Mark



case study

Taylor, who applied for an operations manager post during the programme. Colette Abbiss, his current line manager, explains: "Mark was clearly able to demonstrate his enhanced knowledge resulting from the course and his ability to put that into practice – it was definitely instrumental in his getting the job."

Mark agrees. "Studying for the Diploma has been incredibly hard work, but well worth it. It has confirmed my existing skills and helped me develop new ones, and I was able to apply most of the learning to my previous role as a team manager – particularly the units covering finance, budgeting and managing resources. The session about meeting stakeholder needs and quality objectives

was also very important, because it underpins everything that we do here, and I particularly enjoyed setting smart objectives for my team. I am ready to take on new responsibilities, and feel the course has prepared me well for the challenges of the operational manager role."

Managing performance

For delegate Sam Dodwell (group credit control manager), it's in the area of performance management that the course really paid dividends. "It's easy to focus so much on a busy workload that you forget about the bigger picture," she says. "But as a result of studying the Diploma I now ensure that all the people in my team understand their roles and have clear objectives that are recorded and regularly reviewed. I try to create an atmosphere of trust and support in which constructive feedback – in both directions – enhances everyone's motivation."

We have a constant eye on outcomes and improving performance, and at the same time I've encouraged every member of the team to create a personal development plan that provides direction and opportunity." Sam's boss, finance director Jonathan Clark, is impressed with what she's achieved. "There's a great atmosphere in her team, and their output has improved. Croft management has been excellent for Sam's managerial capabilities, and given her the skills she needs to implement new ideas and processes."

Organisational improvement

Successes like Mark and Sam's have attracted some attention at FCA. There are ripples going round the organisation that we're investing in our people at this level," says David. "A lot of staff are asking whether we'll be running another course, and of course that's good for recruitment and retention. But for me, it's their increased confidence to really manage that counts. They understand the importance of nailing down good practice in every area, whether it's routine stuff like following procedures and undertaking regular supervisions, or the more difficult issues – for instance, they're not afraid to challenge poor performance or deal with complex situations because they have the tools to do it. The programme has facilitated behavioural change that has been instrumental in organisational improvement."

I thoroughly enjoyed doing the CMI Diploma, and it gave me the confidence and skills to take on new challenges



Mark Taylor

The course has enabled me to make better informed decisions that promote trust and respect from within my team



Sam Dodwell

This isn't the kind of training that you just do, get the certificate and forget about – it's absolutely relevant to the situations we're dealing with on a day-to-day basis.

David Ross, head of learning and development, FCA

