

2nd April 2006

Hello Trevor and Team,

Please accept my apologies, as this letter is long overdue. My son, Craig Reece, experienced a placement at C-FAR, the life-changing programme and I would like to explain how this came about – from a mother's point of view.

Craig grew up in a secure loving family environment, but by the time Craig was thirteen his behaviour uncontrollable. However, it was soon apparent why, as one Sunday afternoon Craig told me he had been sexually abused. Craig suffered emotional trauma from the sexual abuse that was evident in his behaviour for many years after. Craig joined the Royal Navy when he was seventeen, but that was not the answer and he was dismissed. Craig's problems persisted and by the age of twenty he was living away from home living a life on drugs, drink, violence and crime. He was destroying himself, pushing the self-destruct button to the maximum. He took no notice of his family, even though we tried to offer support and help. We knew his behaviour was so uncharacteristic but we had no idea of the limits Craig took himself to. The family did what we could to no avail to help him come through this ordeal.

However, Craig eventually was punished for a crime, which resulted in a twelve-month prison sentence, it was at this point, the family relationships broke down and Craig was 'disowned' by his family. I cannot truly put it into words what that put us all through, Craig too, it was utter despair. When you read about 'stress' you think it can never happen to you but the events that started in approximately 1995 were to be with us all for many years. The feelings of guilt (how could I ever let that happen to my son), anger at the justice system, and the desperation of trying to keep up a 'normal way of life' was very difficult. Craig suffered a traumatic experience and the impact on myself, and his brothers (no-one else knew of the events as we kept it

secret from the extended family) was also very traumatic. It is very difficult to put in words and for many years I have tried to do what was best for my son and the sense of failure was overwhelming.

However, whilst Craig was in prison, he wrote to me and gradually over time we were writing weekly. He wrote and told me how he felt at the time – a worthless human being. Craig hated himself as he knew what he had done, how much hurt he had inflicted not only on himself but his family as well. As Craig's prison sentence drew to an end, we were all anxious what would happen to him. In the last few weeks, a ray of hope came through, as Craig was successful in securing a placement on the C-FAR rehabilitation programme. I had never heard of this before but soon found out. The programme for young male offenders was predominantly a charity that was spearheaded by yourself, Trevor, to give young people a 'fresh start' in life. Certain criteria had to be met and the individuals chosen for the programme had to want to change and be motivated enough to help themselves.

Whilst at C-FAR, Craig and I spoke regularly on the telephone and it was not long before I began to realise he sounded 'different'. He spoke with more confidence and sounded happier than he had done for a long time. He explained how he spent his days, working through, for example, team-building and anger management sessions. Predominantly, he identified how he was building up trusting relationships with many of the staff that worked with him on a daily basis. Craig had to leave C-FAR just before its enforced closure but thankfully he had nearly completed the programme. Craig went from strength to strength and started to live independently and secure a job and a flat that has given him his own identity and increased his self-esteem. Craig now has a new lease of life; he has been welcomed back into the family, and currently awaiting a placement in the Army. No-one will ever know what this means to a mother and I will always be eternally grateful for all those people who helped Craig whilst he was at C-FAR.

I have a strong belief that it was Craig's experience at C-FAR that was the crucial point in his life. I reflect a lot on the past and know if Craig had not attended the course, he would either be back in prison or walking the streets. Oh yes – his experience at C-FAR was the pivotal time for Craig and he came through. The relief when you can wake up in the morning and know that your child has survived – come through what was a nightmare. I really mean that – it truly was a nightmare for us all. These are not only words but also feelings as well, worse than you can imagine.

I have to comment on how appalled and also saddened I was to hear of the continued enforced closure of C-FAR, particularly, in respect of the success rate, not only for my son, but others too. The 'powers that be' have a moral duty not to turn their backs on these young people. Tony Blair has talked about the government's mission to make this a 'Giving Age' and this process of change needs to be continually driven forward pro-actively and not just spoken about. The process of change involves all of us – not just a few.

I am aware of your military background Trevor and hope that you succeed in your battle to start a new programme with support from this Government and Public Sector – you deserve to, as I know you and your team have put in a tremendous amount of hard work to raise the profile of this worthwhile and valuable programme. I am sure I am not the only parent who feels this way, the experience of the rehabilitation programme has impacted on more than just a few lives – I am certain it is many.

Once again, Trevor and the team – heart felt thanks from an eternally grateful Mum. You gave me my son back, you cannot put a cost on that – it is priceless!!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S.D.', followed by a period.