



**“For me, the investment has definitely been worth it”**

**Karen’s journey as a foster carer began when she contacted her local authority, hopeful that she could offer ‘short breaks’ to children in the care system.**

Originally, Karen’s plan was to provide accommodation, care and support for young people with complex needs over a short period of time - anything from overnight to a week - however, after receiving a call from her social worker, the plan soon changed. It was during this time that Karen and her family first met Jemal, a young refugee from Eritrea.

“We bonded from the moment he arrived”, Karen explains. “Initially the plan was to help Jemal transition to independence, but he’d had an extremely traumatic journey that left him with deep psychological scars, as well as the physical scars, so after discussions with Jemal, his social worker and our supervising social worker, it was agreed that he would stay with us. He’s 100% part of our family and will live here for as long as he wants to”.

When talking about their time together, Karen radiates a genuine feeling of warmth, and is quick to highlight how proud she and her family are of Jemal. “We can talk about anything together” she explains, “and he has a great relationship with my adult son and his wife”.

“The sense of pride we get when Jemal achieves something, and we are the first people he tells, it’s immeasurable. The young people are so overwhelmed and exhausted when they arrive, they can’t even imagine accomplishing anything, so being able to sit in the audience at a Christmas play - and to clap specifically for them - is great”.

When asked about her role in Jemal’s life as a foster carer, Karen is typically modest and explains how her approach has focused on adopting a positive approach. “The thing I’ve found with fostering is that you have to bank up the good experiences” Karen tell us. “It’s about providing positive moments for people to look back on. For me personally, the investment has definitely been worth it.”

Discover more about caring for a young refugee by contacting a member of the team on **0113 5351048** or [wyr@migrationyorkshire.org.uk](mailto:wyr@migrationyorkshire.org.uk), or by visiting [www.welcomingyoungrefugees.org.uk](http://www.welcomingyoungrefugees.org.uk) today.