



Building  
stronger  
families

## Food Banks Became a Distant Memory

We got to know S and her three children when the family had to flee the father of all three children, who had abused both the mother and two of the children. All three children presented as traumatised. The eldest child was displaying very challenging behaviour, while the youngest was very withdrawn. All the children had missed a large amount of their education, and one child had been out of school for over a year. He told staff: 'I had to get myself kicked out of school so I could be there to protect my mum.'



The relationship between the family members was strained. The siblings were physically assaulting each other, and there was an obvious lack of bond between the mother and her children. Boundaries were non-existent for this family. The mother has limited access to funds so relies heavily on a food bank to feed herself and her children, making weekly visits to local churches to collect non-perishable items.

When the Families, Food and Fun programme started, staff were unsure how this family would react as they had never received any help before. Accepting that things needed to change was hard for them. However, the children soon became interested in the activities we were running. On the first few occasions the family only participated for some of the day's events usually because they hadn't gone to bed until 4am and arrived late at sessions. Before we knew it though, the family was arriving on time, and fully participating, even swimming for the first time! Enjoyment and smiles began to fill the family's faces.



The middle child was a particularly fussy eater, and was unwilling to try new foods until we made healthy kebabs – when she surprised us all by eating apples and grapes. Over the six-week holiday the mother's confidence started to grow, as did the children's. The family were suggesting activities they would like to do and eat over the remaining sessions. Their voices were heard, and one child had the most amazing day when her dream of making her own glittery slime came true.

The mother's reliance on food banks became a distant memory. Routines were now in place and the family enjoyed sitting down together to eat foods that they had never tasted before. The bonds between the siblings and mother was growing. When we visited a forest school we witnessed the mother and child working as a team to saw and make a wooden necklace together. The holiday food and activities programme has been life changing for this family and many others who attend our setting.

Find out more about Family Action's Holiday Food and Activities programmes at [www.family-action.org.uk/what-we-do/children-families/holiday-food-activities/](http://www.family-action.org.uk/what-we-do/children-families/holiday-food-activities/)