At Jamie’s Farm we are committed to delivering a unique blend of ‘Farming, Family and Therapy’ to re-engage disadvantaged young people and equip them to thrive in their secondary school years. We do this through a transformative weeklong residential where we immerse children in agricultural life and make them integral to the running of one of our farms. The experience sees real jobs with tangible outcomes intermixed with therapeutic support in 1:1 or group sessions, and is proving to act as a catalyst for real positive change in their lives. A robust follow up programme helps to make these changes last. In August 2016, we had the opportunity to welcome whole family groups to one of our farms. This came about via Jonty Perchard, Education Manager, who joined Jamie’s Farm after a 15-year background in family counselling. Before joining Jamie’s Farm, Jonty had already suggested that ‘Farming, Family and Therapy’ would resonate with families facing severe challenges; the style of engagement, delivery and nurture was a perfect fit and so we piloted a visit from West London in August 2016. The week was a phenomenal success and all five families benefited enormously and have seen long-term change; this has been reflected in the decreasing levels of support offered to them. Two families are no longer in need of social work support having made great strides forward, and two families open to Child Protection Plans are no longer on Plan:

The Khan* Family’s Story
When the Khan family visited Jamie’s Farm in August 2016, they were in disarray. Years of domestic violence in the home had left mother Saina* lacking confidence, afraid of seeking support and unable to manage the increasingly wayward behaviour of her two older daughters, both of whom had witnessed this abuse. The constant negativity towards the two oldest had led to accusations of favouritism for the youngest daughter and the family had begun to fracture and resent each other.

The family had been placed on a child protection plan and by choosing this family to visit Jamie’s Farm, the local authority were hoping to increase the mother’s self-esteem and confidence, but also to give the family a chance to have some fun together. They hoped that this experience would generate more positive communication within the family, particularly to reduce the rivalry between the girls. Ultimately, they hoped to see enough progress in the family unit to remove them from the child protection plan completely.

On the farm, the family worked incredibly well as a team, inspired by the family ethos modelled by Jamie’s Farm staff: “It was good to see how families can be.” The mother especially enjoyed the mealtime routines and the opportunity to have fun with her children. She developed her confidence over the week by assigning chores to each of her children, something that didn’t go unnoticed in the Friday meeting when her children acknowledged: “It was the first time you took control.”

Six weeks after the visit, the mother has joined a local sewing class; the family has breakfast together almost every day and they have signed up to more family based projects including a four-day art workshop in October 2016. The local authorities were astounded by their progress in such a short space of time, and the family is now working towards removal from the child protection plan.

Two further family visits took place in August 2017, funded by the Summer Give. Poignantly, all the families and young people who visited Jamie’s Farm this summer came via Families Forward (the support services) and lived in or in close proximity to Grenfell Tower in Kensington. The Families
Forward team were pleased to be able to offer a ray of light by inviting these young people and families to the farm, who have otherwise experienced a traumatic and challenging time recently. Below is the initial feedback from their time with us:

“**It has brought us closer, even knowing that things are going to change again.**”

“I found out what my son likes which I didn’t know before. It’s my job to make it possible in the future. I am really looking forward to it.”

“I want to remember that on the Farm I am confident, happy and glad when I am here and not scared.”

As Jamie’s Farm expands to a third farm this year we are planning more family visits so that we can continue to support the network around a child, as well as the child themselves to thrive.

*names have been changed

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