

ready, aim, parent

At 16, Joanne wasn't ready to have a baby, but she did. When Children's Services stepped in, they were concerned that Joanne wasn't able to keep a baby safe. Connections was asked to provide supports. We visited Joanne, got to know her and her baby. And we helped her understand all the things she needed to do as a mother to keep her baby safe and healthy.

Joanne was not an emotionally mature person – she was just 16. Joanne also had other challenges, including difficulty learning. Even with support, it became evident that Joanne simply wasn't ready to parent. Connections was asked to testify in Family Court about Joanne's parenting capacity. We talked to Joanne before the court date so she understood what we would have to say – about our concerns. Joanne understood Connections' role and what the court decision was likely to be

Fast-forward four years and Connections receives a phone call from Joanne. We were surprised to hear from her and more surprised to hear that she wanted us to be in her life again. She remembered that, because of us, her baby was taken from her.

But she explained, “I'm in a different place now. I have a long-term relationship and I'm pregnant. I want to be able to raise my baby. Will you help me?”

Joanne has been happily married with her children, all under one roof, for a decade. They are a close-knit, busy family. Joanne and her family are still part of Connections' family. One of Connections' In-Home team members visits with her to help her manage her family and ensure her children are thriving.

Much of the time, they need very little support. But like any other family, sometimes there are challenges. Joanne and her family also come to Connections' family picnics, potlucks and other events. There, she gets to know other parents and sometimes shares her story, helping new parents develop their confidence.

She tells them they can do it – and to make sure they ask for help when they need it. Joanne lived that success – from being told she could never parent to being a terrific mom with great kids. She made it when she developed the self-awareness to ask for help. And when she asked for help, Connections was there for her. And we still are.