

Adoption UK Review of My Life Story (August 2003 Magazine)

My Life Story by Bridget Betts and Afshan Ahmad, © Information PLUS, Bridget Betts & Afshan Ahmad 2003; Version 1.0; £195.00 + £34.13 VAT.

Reviewed by Rosemary Evans

My Life Story is an interactive CD-ROM and is advertised as the first of its kind for life story work. It aims to help a child come to terms with the loss of birth family, to understand the reasons for being looked after and to think positively about future plans, whilst providing opportunities for individual support and counselling should it be required. The main menu comes in the form of a treasure island where seven interactive sections are located, offering a range of activities and worksheets for the 8-16 year olds on the themes of 'People and Places', 'Past and Present', 'Facts and Figures', 'Likes and Dislikes', 'Hopes and Fears', 'Wishes and Dreams', and 'Contacts'.

Having watched my two children using this resource, I can thoroughly recommend it. Anything computer-based is of immediate interest but the excellent combination of music, sound effects, animation and graphics makes it a very attractive programme. In fact, whenever started it was hard to persuade either of them to close it down! They worked separately and all input was recorded on their own individual floppy disc to keep safely. For my youngest it was necessary to read instructions and questions, and to assist with recording data from time to time. Facts already documented in life story books were easily duplicated, together with some of the information given at placement of which they were unaware e.g. family history, health and legal aspects. The children were happy to discover the 'buried treasure' and build up a confidential record of their lives, limiting the topics and/or details if they so wished. Obviously, some issues covered are of a very sensitive nature but as the programme provides safe opportunities to freely express anger, disappointment, private thoughts and feelings, the experience did not cause them distress.

This excellent resource which comes with detailed guidelines and offer of professional training, is designed to be used by an experienced worker with any number of looked after children which is perhaps reflected in the price. This sum could be out of the range of adoptive families who may find a child arriving with this valuable work already started. Hopefully a version for adopters can be made available.