

DEVON FOSTER CARERS' ASSOCIATION



The **'special edition'** of the **Fostering Devon newsletter** that came out on 16th May highlighted plans that Devon's Fostering Service is considering changing foster carers' membership from Fostering Network to Foster Talk.

A breakdown of the benefits offered by The Fostering Network are **attached** to this editorial, along with, for the sake of clarity, a copy of the benefits mentioned on the **'special edition'** (**also attached**)

Sonia Sandiford has arranged dates to meet with carers in each area to update on service redesign and tier 3 payments.

It's really important carers' views around these proposed changes are heard and understood, so please attend if you can. The dates and venues for the meetings are detailed below; -

Exeter & East - Monday 5th June 11am - 2pm at Newcourt Community Centre, Exeter

North & Mid - Wednesday, 7th June, 10.00am – 1.00pm at Higher Bickington Community Centre, Little Bickington Lane, High Bickington, Devon EX37 9HG

South - Wednesday 14th June 10am – 1pm at Follaton House, Totnes

If you haven't already confirmed your attendance, please do so without delay by emailing

childsc.fosteringoperationsmanager-mailbox@devon.gov.uk



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ELECTION DAY (8th June) is almost upon us!

Whatever your political persuasion, have you considered asking your local MP what he (or she) is prepared to do for fostering in this County, if you elect them?

Remember, they're our representatives and now is a perfect opportunity to make them understand some of the issues faced by children in care (and their foster carers) in Devon.

You can find your local MP by checking out

www.mysociety.org/TheyWorkForYou

and follow the online instructions. After searching for them why not go on to submit an online message to them?

Why not make them earn your vote?! 😊

REMINDER - The deadline for responses to the National Fostering Stocktake – 'Call for Evidence' is the 16th June !!

Your responses to this important stocktake **will** be taken into consideration in the panel's recommendations to Government. The panel's decisions will directly impact on how the Government reacts to fostering nationally in future. As we all recognise, this is a very important time for fostering in this country. Wouldn't you rather be part of future planning and have your views taken into account – rather than just be a bystander?! 😊

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-fostering-stocktake-call-for-evidence>

HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE – GIVE YOUR VIEWS



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REMINDER

Tax - General guidance on fostering and tax can be found on HMRC website, <https://www.gov.uk/foster-carers/help-with-the-cost-of-fostering>, but carers are **STRONGLY advised** to check their own individual personal circumstances carefully.

National Insurance Contributions - To ensure you receive the benefit of Class 2 National Insurance credits when you retire, you will need to have at hand a copy of a letter from Children's Services confirming how long you've been caring for Devon.

Don't miss out

Usual **MINUTES (and Summary)**, of our last meeting on 28th April 2017 **attached** together with copy **CONSTITUTION** (outlining our Aims and Objectives).

If anyone would like to raise anything to be included in the **Agenda** for our next meeting, please do let us know – remember, this is **YOUR** Association!
Your views matter!!



ATTACHMENT 1

FOSTERING NETWORK "...offer the following:

- **Legal Protection Insurance** – all Devon fostering households are covered by our legal protection scheme. This includes any approved foster carers, their partners, the foster carer's parents, their partners' parents, their own children (all of whom are permanently resident in the UK or RoI), plus any other dependant living in the home. They have access to a 24-hour legal helpline and a **stress counselling service**. We provide an experienced solicitor to prepare and accompany you to a police interview under caution as a result of an allegation and we cover up to £100,000 legal costs in defending an allegation. We also cover **historic allegations**, which means the alleged incident doesn't have to have taken place during the membership period, which other insurance providers might not cover. This is always important to find out if you are considering moving provider as you may find yourself with less comprehensive cover.
- **A Member Helpline** – this is a one-stop shop to get advice and guidance from experienced advisors about any issue related to being a foster carer. We have one number to call if you need advice about any of the following:



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- o **Finances** – including how to calculate your income tax, welfare benefits, pensions, allowances, savings etc.
- o **Education** – including pupil premium, exclusion, PEP meetings and support for special educational needs
- o **Health** – including CAMHS and mental health, emotional well-being, supporting a child or young person with a disability, LAC nurses and health reviews
- o **Professional issues** – including review meetings, approval range, placement disruption, permanence options and working with other professionals around the child

All of our advisors are trained in the latest developments in fostering and have access to the latest findings from The Fostering Network's innovation projects and work with policy makers such as the DoE and Ofsted. They talk to foster carers on a daily basis about a huge variety of issues and regularly speak to foster carers who call about a particular issue such as tax and then also need advice on education for their child and how to prepare for an upcoming review. Our focus is on the quality and depth of our advice and there is no need to ring multiple numbers for different areas of advice.

- **Information** – our quarterly magazine, monthly e-news and online resources give our members information and in-depth analysis on all aspects of fostering, from supporting unaccompanied asylum seeking children to kinship care.
- **Online community** – all of our members have access to our secure, member-only online community, providing peer support to thousands of foster carers from across the UK. With hundreds of posts every month about anything and everything to do with fostering, there is a hugely supportive community for those who may not be able to meet other foster carers at local support groups and events.
- **Member events** – as well as running workshops at support groups (such as the recent tax workshop), we also run regional conferences exclusively for members of The Fostering Network, where members from across the region can come together to learn about the latest developments in fostering and meet other professionals working with looked after children.
- **Discounts** – all foster carer members get discounts on our publications, training and events. On top of this they get exclusive discounts for family days out through Merlin – at places such as Alton Towers, Sea Life and Legoland – plus discounts on family holidays, foster carer home insurance and a specialist mortgage helpline with discounted fee for arranging a mortgage. As a charity, we never use the funds from membership fees to pay a third-party provider for discounts. All of our discounts are arranged in kind from organisations and companies that understand the vital role foster carers play in caring for children and young people.
- **Influence** – our members help us to make fostering better for everyone involved by shaping our campaigns, such as Staying Put, by telling us what it means to be a foster carer and responding to our consultations; they help us to raise the profile of fostering and dispel myths about looked after children through our media work; and they help us to improve practice through the new methods piloted in our innovation projects. Without our members' support, ideas, stories and enthusiasm, we couldn't have the impact we have on the fostering sector and the lives of children and young people in care.

We have an Independent Support service that provides high-quality independent support in the event of an allegation at discounted rates for those services who buy foster carer membership from us. We have been supporting foster carers for decades and have built up a wealth of experience."



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ATTACHMENT 2

“FosterTalk membership will provide you and all members of your household with:

- **Legal Expenses Insurance Cover** - Covers you, your partner and all dependent members of your household for legal costs and provides specialist solicitor(s), in the event of: Arrest & Interview Under Caution and criminal or civil legal defence costs.
- **Legal Advice Line 24hrs, 365 days** – speak to solicitors to gain expert advice on matters related or unrelated to foster care.
- **Tax/Accountancy & Benefits Advice Line** – from a team of qualified and trained accountants and tax advisors specialising in matters related to foster carers including tax, national insurance, benefits and fostering allowances.
- **Social Work Support Helpline** – Independent Social Workers offering advice and guidance on matters relating to fostering.
- **Education Advisory Helpline** – from qualified teachers specialising in issues relating to looked after children. And, access to on-line learning which follows the curriculum from 5 years to post 16.
- **Quarterly Magazine** – FosterTalk’s magazine, focused on Foster Carers.
- **Counselling Helpline** – emotional support, guidance and advice on personal or professional issues including how to deal with stress and bereavement.
- **Medical/First Aid Helpline** – Provided by a team of nurses who can provide detailed, practical advice on first aid and a wide range of general healthcare matters.
- **Independent Financial Advice Helpline** – Specialist advice and recommendations specific to Foster Carers, including mortgages, income protection and personal pensions.

Online Forums - Simply login to www.fostertalk.org and post messages to other Foster Carers across the UK.

Exclusive Concessions & Discounts through YOUATWORK - access to products and services from hundreds of top suppliers offering discounts on household names including fitness, music, travel, food & drink, fashion, days out and much more

More information about membership can be found on their website at <https://www.fostertalk.org/service-provider/membership-carers#membenefits>

We have yet to finalise arrangements for transferring membership so you currently remain registered with Fostering Network. We will be writing to you informing you of the date of the change and we would like to pass on your contact details to FosterTalk.

Once the change is agreed FosterTalk would send you out membership packs. They are also proposing to arrange some launch meetings across the county with carers where they would introduce the service, bring along lots of information/publicity material freebies and ensure that you are ready to use the service.”



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DON'T FORGET

Next Meeting will be

Monday 12th June 2017

at 10.30 a.m.

Oaklands Court, Tiverton

Hope to see you there



How to contact us; -

- **via** Facebook. Simply 'friend request' one of us, (Patricia Bagshaw, Leigh Strange, Nicky Knight or Mandy Heggadon) on Facebook and, once we've checked you are who you say you are, we'll add you to the closed group. After that, simply look for Devon Foster Carer's Association and you should be able to find us, and join in the chat....

OR;

- **via** any one of our committee (so far!) Trish Bagshaw or Leigh Strange (**North**), Lewis Crowden (**Exeter**), Mandy Heggadon or Sarah Turner (**Exeter & East**), Nicky Knight, David Leyland (**South**) or Rosemary Miles. We have carers from all walks, with all kinds of reasons for fostering and with all kinds of experiences. Feel free to contact any of us for any information about the Association and what we're doing on **YOUR** behalf or, you'd simply like to get more involved.

If anyone would like to join us or help in any way, please do just let us know – the more the merrier.

REMEMBER, THIS IS YOUR ASSOCIATION

