

DEVON FOSTER CARERS' ASSOCIATION



SONS AND DAUGHTERS' WEEK

We all know the MASSIVE contribution our own (birth) children make to fostering, which goes largely unnoticed, except by us. Well, during Sons & Daughter's Week, we thought it was high time they were given the acknowledgement and recognition they deserve, so...

...on the 1st October 2017

we've organised an event for them, just to celebrate them, at

The Wait Inn, Zeal Monachorum

The event includes the use of a play area and swimming pool (contributed by the Association) so bring your YP's (and your own!) swimming kit, if you want to take advantage. Two sessions are booked (11am – 12 and 3 – 4 pm) and the venue has very kindly been provided FREE!

Each of our birth children will be celebrated for their contribution to fostering, with a gift / certificate / award / other recognition (Thanks to a generous contribution from The Fostering Service)

A buffet can be arranged for a cost of £6.50 per person and includes a pasty, sandwich, pizza and chips, so you wouldn't even need to worry about tea on the way home! So, why not bring the whole family along?

Contact Mandy Heggadon on 07763455586 or email heggml5@gmail.com to let her know the numbers you plan to take along, and to provide her with details of your birth children, for the award **(ESSENTIAL)**.



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Fostering Network want foster carers' views on fees, and terms and conditions

Whether you receive a separate fee and allowance, a lump sum, or just an allowance, **Fostering Network want your views on pay**. They've compiled a survey and would love to know what you think so they can be in the best possible position to continue to influence fostering policy throughout the UK, to suit you.

Please take just five minutes to complete it at...<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/>

As you (hopefully) are already aware, Devon's Fostering Service is considering changing its foster carers' membership from Fostering Network to Foster Talk.

A breakdown of the benefits offered by The Fostering Network are listed on the next page, along with, for the sake of clarity, a copy of the benefits that Foster Talk also offer. **Please do take time to compare these.**

If you have comments to make on which organisation you'd prefer to provide your support, you can make them known to the Operations Manager (Luke Chapman) via childsc.fosteringoperationsmanager-mailbox@devon.gov.uk

To ensure carers are fully informed, we've invited reps from BOTH organisations to our next Association meeting (further details at the end of this newsletter) to provide carers with an opportunity to hear what they offer first hand, and to allow an opportunity for carers to ask questions of each provider.

After you've read the lists below, why not make a note of the types of support you would want to be sure was in place for you and your family – think 'worst case scenario' – and bring it along to our next meeting and compare what 's available for you and yours. (If you can't attend the next meeting, let one of the committee have your views and we can pass them on)

This could be a major change for carers in Devon, since Fostering Network have supported Devon's foster carers for well over 20 years – so make sure your views are known.



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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:
 - 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



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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."

"Foster Talk 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** – Foster Talk'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>



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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 Foster Talk.

Once the change is agreed Foster Talk 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."

JUNIOR ISA's for CIC

You'll have seen a lot of information around recently about Junior ISAs. You'll remember, Children in Care who have been looked after for 12 months or more (*and who did not previously benefit from a Child Trust Fund*), are entitled to receive a £200 Government payment into a Junior Individual Savings Account and The Share Foundation (<https://sharefound.org/>), has been running the Junior ISA scheme for looked after children and young people on behalf of the Department for Education since 2012.

What is interesting is that carers, and others (*– e.g. birth family*) are able to make additional payments into the scheme once the ISA is in place (*although additional payments can only be made until the YP becomes 18*). Donations can be made online via <https://sharefound.org/donate/> (or, if you prefer, you can simply print off the form and do it by post). Do you know if your CIC has a Junior ISA account open to them? Why not ask your child's social worker? The designated person appointed to provide the list of qualifying Children in Care in Devon is now Sara Beck in the Finance Team (sara.beck@devon.gov.uk).

Full lists of Local Authorities & Open Junior ISAs show the local authorities in England, Wales and Scotland and, in Northern Ireland, Health & Social Care Trusts, together with the number of open Junior ISAs relevant to each and these can be viewed on (<https://sharefound.org/full-register-of-local-authorities-numbers-of-junior-isas-open/>) All local authorities throughout the UK are now enrolled in the scheme, and the lists will next be updated in October 2017.



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Operation Imprezza is a UK based charity helping to support self-sustaining equal access education in rural Western Kenya and Devon foster carers, David and Marion Leyland, are joining forces with them to arrange a small group of social workers, foster carers and teenagers in care to visit a Secondary School for children in poverty in Kenya in August 2018. You can visit www.operation-imprezza.org for more information about the organisation. If you're interested in finding out more, David and Marion would love to hear from you at davidleyland@hotmail.com.



On 17th July, Redbridge Borough Council recently voted to give their FOSTER CARERS 60 per cent off council tax bills, and teenagers leaving care will not have to pay anything until they are 25. The new concessions come into force in September of this year. The Councillors knocked more than half off foster carers' council tax payments in a bid to recruit more of them to look after the Council's children in care.

Smart move from the Councillors at Redbridge Council - WHAT A WONDERFUL WAY TO SUPPORT EXISTING CARERS, WHILE ENCOURAGING THE NEW.

Read the whole story, via http://www.guardian-series.co.uk/news/15423031.Foster_parent_or_care_leaver__You_l_soon_see_your_council_tax_go_down_by_quite_a_lot/



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You'll no doubt have seen the recent Fostering Network magazine, which confirms that the date for this years' conference is, regrettably, on the same day as our next meeting and AGM. The agenda for the conference hasn't been sent out yet, so we don't know what kinds of things will be discussed, but we do feel it's really important for someone from Devon to attend, who would be willing to feed back to our subsequent meeting.

COULD YOU BE THAT PERSON?

If you're interested in attending and taking notes to deliver at our subsequent meeting, please do let one of us know, in the usual way. This is a perfect opportunity for you to be part of the 'bigger' picture and ensure the views of Devon's carers are not overlooked.

(NB: The Association would pay your entry fee and you'd be entitled to reclaim your mileage, so we'd ensure you weren't out of pocket).

IMPORTANT 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 Childrens' Services confirming how long you've been caring for Devon.

Don't miss out

– ask your supervising social worker for one now!

Usual **MINUTES (and Summary)**, of our last meeting on 20th July 2017 **attached** together with copy **CONSTITUTION** (outlining our Aims and Objectives). 😊

If you 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!!



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REMEMBER; You can now forward your concerns and queries to
childsc.fosteringoperationsmanager-mailbox@devon.gov.uk

(we're informed the mailbox is checked every day)

If you'd like to know more about what we do and you're not a member of our Facebook forum, you can just let one of us have your email address and we can make sure you receive all the same information as everyone else.

Our aim is to help improve communication for ALL foster carers in Devon to enable us to be better connected, so that we can access advice and information quickly to help us continue to do a great job for Devon's Fostering Service.

DON'T FORGET

NEXT MEETING & AGM

will be on 28th September 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, 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.

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