

DEVON FOSTER CARERS' ASSOCIATION



NEWS!

Devon's Corporate Parenting Board

...undertook a Summer Walkabout recently, meeting groups of foster carers, social workers and personal advisors in permanence and transition teams and fostering teams across Devon. The visits included meeting with the virtual school, health staff, CAMHS staff and the Police, and focused on a fact-finding mission on the service the CPB provides to Children in Care.

A draft Report has now been produced and we've been asked to share it with our fostering colleagues, along with an invitation to offer any amendments or additions that you feel may have been missed during the actual walkabout

(attached to this newsletter at Summary 1)



This is a great opportunity to make your views known about ways in which the Service can improve.

If you have any specific ideas to offer, please do send them to hannah.washington-jo@devon.gov.uk



DEVON FOSTER CARERS' ASSOCIATION

UPCOMING EVENTS



The Fostering Networks' annual conference – in Taunton - this year falls, regrettably, on the same day as our next meeting and AGM, i.e.;

Thursday 28th September

Consequently, unfortunately, members of Committee cannot attend.

We do believe, however, that it's really important for someone from Devon to attend this conference, to ensure Devon's foster carers are not 'overlooked' in the bigger, national picture and we're looking for someone who'd be interested in attending and taking notes to deliver at our subsequent meeting. The Association will pay your entry fee, and you'd be entitled to reclaim your mileage, so we'd ensure you weren't out of pocket. *(A copy of the Agenda is attached to this newsletter at Summary 2).*

COULD YOU BE THAT PERSON?

If so, please do let one of us know you're interested, and we'll make the arrangements.

TABLE TOP SALE



In an effort to raise a little money for future events, we plan to have a Table Top Sale to enable members to sell items they no longer want or need at future meetings

For a small donation to Association funds), if you have any items you'd like to dispose of, (e.g., books, toys, clothing, equipment, clothing, etc) you can bring them along to the meetings with you, *along with a ticket identifying the price you'd like to get for them*, and simply place them on the designated table as you come in for others to view. Anything that doesn't sell can easily be taken back home for advertising, (perhaps, on the "Stuff Swap" link on our Facebook page).

COME ON – WHY NOT CLEAR SOME SPACE AND GRAB A BARGAIN!



DEVON FOSTER CARERS' ASSOCIATION

SON'S AND DAUGHTER'S CELEBRATION EVENT

A **reminder** that we thought it was high time our birth children were given the acknowledgement and recognition they deserve for their contribution to fostering in Devon, so...

on the

1st October 2017

during "Sons & Daughter's Week"

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

The Waie Inn, Zeal Monachorum (EX17 6DF)

The venue has very kindly been donated FREE(!) and includes the use of a play area and swimming pool (*the cost of which has been donated by the Association!*) so bring the whole family (birth and foster children alike!) and don't forget your swimming kit! 😊

(Two sessions are booked (11am – 12 and 3 – 4 pm))

Thanks to a generous contribution from The Fostering Service, each birth child will be celebrated for their contribution to fostering in Devon, and will receive a gift / certificate / award / other recognition.

A buffet can be arranged for a cost of £6.50 per person and includes a pasty, sandwich, pizza and chips, so you don't even need to worry about tea on the way home!

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

DON'T FORGET...

David and Marion Leyland's offer of a trip to Kenya to visit a Secondary School for children in poverty in August 2018, with Operation Imprezza. (Check it out at www.operation-imprezza.org).

If you're interested in finding out more, contact David or Marion, direct at davidleyland@hotmail.com



DEVON FOSTER CARERS' ASSOCIATION

As we've previously publicised, Devon's Fostering Service is considering changing its foster carers' membership from Fostering Network to Foster Talk.

A breakdown of the benefits offered by both are listed on this newsletter.

Please do take time to compare these!

Both organisations will be offering a short presentation at our next meeting on Thursday 28th September, so if you are unsure about what benefits each offer, please do come along and be informed.

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) after the meeting, via childsc.fosteringoperationsmanager-mailbox@devon.gov.uk

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 please make sure your views are known.

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.



DEVON FOSTER CARERS' ASSOCIATION

- **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.”

“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.



DEVON FOSTER CARERS' ASSOCIATION

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 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."

RAISE

(Mental Health Promotion) team at Merseyside Youth Association

have created and developed an original, fun, new card game. "Bounce Back" enables carers to explore resilience with their children and young people in a fun and interactive way. Based on the Resilience Framework, it has been developed using evidence-based research and the pack of cards are available to purchase from Merseyside Youth Association for just £6.



"Bounce Back" stars Resilient Ralph and his friends, the ResiliANTS. Ralph has springs so that he can bounce back from his problems and keep going even when things are hard. His friends, the ResiliANTS, are based on the five columns of the Resilience Framework

The game also features Anguish Ant, representing the problems that we can all face. However, with help from Ralph and his friends, Anguish Ant can be controlled.

Each colourful card in the deck represents a different component of resilience, and can be used to discuss resilience with children and young people in an interactive and accessible way.

Each pack provides instructions for the 'Chase the Anguish Ant' game, which is a fun way of introducing the concept of risk and resilience to children and young people. However, the cards can be used in a variety of ways! For more information,

<https://www.liverpoolcamhs.com/parents-carers/bounce-back-a-game-exploring-resilience-with-children/>



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REGULAR NOTICES

DON'T FORGET!

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. – ask your supervising social worker for one now!

Don't miss out

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

REMINDER;

You can now forward any concerns and queries direct to childsc.fosteringoperationsmanager-mailbox@devon.gov.uk

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

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!!



DEVON FOSTER CARERS' ASSOCIATION

If you'd like to know more about what we do and you're not yet a member of our Facebook forum, 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, to enable us to access advice and information quickly to help us continue to do the great job we do 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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