

Welcome

Welcome to the March edition of the Adopt South West newsletter where you'll find our family activities, parent events and support groups. National guidance and regional resources can be found at the end of the newsletter, along with reviews from parents.

We are trialing a shorter version of this newsletter with the same information and links to see if a condensed format is an improvement. We hope you find the newsletter easier to navigate and digest. If you have any feedback, please email communications@devon.gov.uk

Could you mentor a new adoptive parent? Do you feel you can support others? Could you spend an hour a week, a fortnight or a month mentoring a new adoptive parent? [Visit our website to find out more about becoming part of our Peer Mentoring Scheme and to read some of the positive feedback we've had from people who are peer mentors.](#)

If you are interested in becoming a mentor, please email our Peer Mentoring Co-ordinator and Family Practitioner, [Beverly Holmes](#).

We are family

Being an adoptive family can create all sorts of questions for the family and friends that are part of your lives.

"What is Therapeutic Parenting?"

"Are you criticising how I parented you?"

"Why are you doing that?"

"Why aren't you parenting like I used to parent you?"

"We want to help but don't feel we are getting it right"



Hilary Harris and Sue Pearson, from Adopt South West, are interested to know if your family and friends would like the opportunity for a regular, **online**, meet up to ask questions, and share their worries and laughter, about becoming part of your children's lives.

Would it be helpful to:

- offer talks from therapists to explain why you live the lives you do?
- hold discussion sessions about the impact of in-utero and early trauma on the developing brain, or life story work, or contact with birth families or...?

- generally meet up and chat about issues, as they arise?

We'd like to know what you think! Please help us to learn by [completing this 'We are family' short questionnaire](#), by Friday 22 March 2024.

April (Easter) school holiday events

Treasure trail walk and picnic – Somerset (Nunney)

Join Kim and Hilary from Adopt South West for a Treasure trail walk around Nunney, Somerset, stopping part way for a picnic lunch. Please bring a picnic lunch/drinks.

- [Find out more about the Treasure trail, walk and picnic – Somerset](#)
- **Wednesday 3 April, 11:30am to 2pm**
- **To book:** please email us adoptsouthwestsupport@devon.gov.uk

Equus Family Fun Day – Somerset (Taunton)

Join Sue from Adopt South West for another relaxed day of family fun at Somerset Equus. Enjoy a day with the animals, craft making and play in a purpose-built yard

- [Find out more about the Equine Family Fun Day - Somerset](#)
- **Wednesday 3 April, 11am to 2:30pm**
- Please bring a picnic lunch. Contribution of £5 per family, collected on the day.
- **To book:** please email us adoptsouthwestsupport@devon.gov.uk

Walk, play and picnic – Somerset (Taunton)

Join Lynne and Sue from Adopt South West for a family walk and talk in Taunton – all welcome. Please bring a picnic lunch/drinks and dress for the weather. This will be wheel accessible walk. There's a great play park adjacent to the café.

- [Making Connections Walk and Talk: Tuesday group – Somerset \(Taunton\)](#)
- **Tuesday 9 April, 11:30am to 2pm**
- **To book:** please email us adoptsouthwestsupport@devon.gov.uk

Stay and Make Crafting Activity Session – Somerset (Glastonbury)

Join Kim and Hilary from Adopt South West for a springtime family Stay and Make Crafting Activity Session at the Yeast Scrap store in Glastonbury. Get inspired by the photos from the half-term event above - and let's see what fabulous arts and crafts can be made with scrap materials!

- [Find out more about the Stay and Make Crafting Session - Somerset](#)
- **Thursday 11 April, 2pm to 4pm**

- Contribution of £2 per child to cover materials and refreshments, collected on the day. Partially funded.
- **To book:** please email us adoptsouthwestsupport@devon.gov.uk

Events hosted by Adopt South west

Book now!

Our [support activities web page](#) has all of our events listed, and we've categorised them:

- [Education psychology drop-ins](#)
- [Graduate groups and support groups](#)
- [Life story sessions](#)
- [Parent-led groups](#)
- [School holiday events](#)
- [Therapeutic parenting](#)
- [Wellness courses](#)



If any of our Adopt South West events have low sign-ups, we won't be able to run them, so please do [refer to our website beforehand](#) to check the event has not been cancelled.

Below are the links to book our Adopt South West courses, sessions and groups. Be quick and book now to ensure a place is still available. All events and activities are free, unless stated otherwise.

- [New! Just Right State: six session course for parents](#)
- [New! Therapeutic Parenting: online evening course](#)
- [Life story sessions \(online, free\)](#)
- [Education psychology clinics: Devon 2024 \(online, free\)](#)
- [Let's Play group \(Somerset\)](#)
- [Support groups](#)
- [Local parent-led support groups](#)
- [National guidance and regional resources](#)
- [Please contact us - out of hours support](#)

Click on the [pink web links](#) to find further information about the events on our website.

To book any of our Adopt South West events listed below, please email: adoptsouthwestsupport@devon.gov.uk

New! Just Right State: six session course for parents

Understanding the sensory and emotional world of your child

The Just Right State parents programme is a six-session course, based on the principles of Sensory Attachment Intervention, for parents to develop a deeper understanding about how their child's nervous system works; to observe their child's ability to self-regulate; and to

consider how to provide a regulating environment in the home. [Visit our website to find out more.](#)

- [Just Right State: six session course for parents](#)
- **Tuesdays 10am to 1pm on 16 and 23 April, 7,14 and 21 May and 4 June** (it's important that you attend all the sessions)
- Funded through the Adoption Support Fund for eligible families

New! Therapeutic Parenting: online evening course

Register for our new eight-week online therapeutic parenting course facilitated by [Cat Gifford](#), HCPC Registered Social Worker and held via Zoom. A session will be dedicated to thinking about how to have life story conversations with your child.

- [Therapeutic Parenting: online evening course May to August - find out more](#)
- **Thursday 16 May to Thursday 11 July 2024, 7:30pm to 9:30pm**
- **To book:** Funded through the Adoption Support Fund ([ASGSF](#)) for eligible families. Booking closes on Thursday 21 March.

Life story sessions (online, free)

Life story drop-in sessions offer adoptive parents an opportunity to discuss life story work at free online, one-to-one sessions with a member of the Adopt South West team. Virtual sessions are for **one hour** at 10am, 11am, or midday. Follow the links below for information on how to book a session:

- [Thursday 14 March](#) at 10am or 11am or midday
- [Thursday 9 May](#) at 10am or 11am or midday
- [Thursday 6 June](#) at 10am or 11am or midday
- [Thursday 11 July](#) at 10am or 11am or midday
- [More sessions](#) for 2024
- **Location:** online

Education psychology clinics: Devon 2024 (online, free)

These free online, one-to-one sessions with an Education Psychologist are for adoptive parents with children attending Devon schools. Virtual sessions are for **one hour**. Follow the links below for information on how to book a session:

- [Education psychology clinics - Exeter/Mid/East Devon area](#) - slots between 9:30am and 12:30pm on Tuesdays
- [Education psychology clinics - North Devon area](#) - slots between 10am and 1pm on Fridays
- [Education psychology clinics - South/West Devon area](#) - slots between 9:30am and 12:30pm on Thursdays.

Let's Play group (Somerset)

Adopt South West plan to run a Let's Play Group in Somerset and would like expressions of interest. [Visit our website to find out more.](#)

If you are interested in attending please email childsc.adoptsouthwestfamilyfinding-mailbox@devon.gov.uk and you will be sent a referral form to complete.

Support groups

All groups are free, unless stated otherwise. Click on the [pink web links](#) to find further information about the events on our website.

To book any of our Adopt South West led support groups listed below, please email: adoptsouthwestsupport@devon.gov.uk



[Making Connections: Monthly Tuesday drop-in support group \(Taunton\)](#)

Meet Louise Degregorio, Lynne Mockridge and Sue Pearson from Adopt South West who will be on hand to welcome people and will also be offering the opportunity to chat with professionals who are involved with supporting families.

- **Tuesday 12 March** then Tuesday 9 April, **10am to 12pm**

[Monthly Friday drop-in support group – Somerset \(Martock, Yeovil area\)](#)

Meet Hilary Harris who is an Adopt South West Family Support Practitioner and an adoptive parent:

- **Friday 3 May** (no group meeting on Good Friday, 29 March), **10am to 12pm**

[Monthly Friday drop-in support group: Somerset \(Shepton Mallet\)](#)

Meet Hilary Harris who is an Adopt South West Family Support Practitioner and an adoptive parent:

- **Friday 15 March** then Friday 19 April, **10am to midday**

Post-Grad Group: Exeter (Devon)

The Post-Grad Group is open to any adoptive parents, whether you have completed a Therapeutic Parenting Course or not. The sessions are led by [Cas Schneider](#) (who also teaches our in-person 16-week Therapeutic Parenting training course).

- **Thursday 7 March 2024** then Thursday 4 April, **10am to 1pm**

Parent support group: South Brent (South Devon)

Join Karen from Adopt South West at our next informal drop-in session. We use PACE and a therapeutic parenting approach. [Find more information and future dates on our website.](#) Please note the group now meets monthly on Mondays.

- **Monday 25 March, 9am to midday** (One off time change, usually 10am to 1pm)
- **How to book:** please email karen.pomfret@devon.gov.uk

Parents' monthly virtual support group

[Bay Deane](#), psychotherapist and adoptive parent, facilitates these monthly evening online support sessions for adopters. This is a friendly, supportive group and new members will be very welcome.

- **Tuesday 12 March, 7:30pm to 9pm**

Local parent-led support groups

FASD Hub South West

A parent-led support group for adoptive parents of children, young people, and adults with or without a formal diagnosis of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) across the South West of England. [Find out what the group offers.](#)

- The [FASD South West website](#) is packed with resources and new information on FASD, education, benefits, health, Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and much more!
- **To join:** If you would like to be added to the confidential mailing list for FASD resources and events please email: fasd.southwest@gmail.com

Devon parent-led group - stay and play, brew and chat: Exeter (PantsOverTrousers) - (every two weeks)

PantsOverTrousers stay and play, brew and chat is a free group run by adopters.

- **Friday 22 March, 9:30am to 11:30am**
- [Future group dates are planned until Friday 19 July 2024](#)
- **To join** please contact Karen Pomfret karen.pomfret@devon.gov.uk

Social groups hosted by The Good Life Projects (weekly)

Free social groups sessions are being held at a Somerset farm hosted by one of our adoptive families: The Good Life Projects.

- **Every Wednesday 10am to 11:30am - adoptive parents**
- **Every Saturday 9:30am to 11am - adoptive families**
- **To join:** Please [RSVP through The Good Life Projects website](#) if you are interested.

Adoption Support Group - Taunton (monthly)

A parent-led adoption support group meets in term time and welcomes other adoptive parents.

- **Every third Wednesday (evening) of the month.**
- **Location:** Join their Facebook group where location of the meeting and details are shared. It is called [Adoption Support Group Taunton](#).
- **To join:** For more details please contact Catherine Green on [07813 738823](tel:07813738823).

Adopters support group - Plympton (monthly)

A parent-led support group that meets in person, in Plympton, for adopters to have a friendly chat and share ideas. The group *usually* meets on the first Tuesday of the month.

- **Tuesday 26 March, 10:45am to 12:45pm**
- **To join** and for location details, please contact Karen Pomfret karen.pomfret@devon.gov.uk

Home for Good Family support group - Torbay (monthly)

A safe place to connect, share ideas and pray together with a group of foster and adoptive parents; children are welcome too.

- **Meeting on the second Tuesday of the month for a coffee morning at a church in Torquay**
- **To join:** For further details and meeting times please contact h4gtorbay@gmail.com

National guidance and regional resources

This month, look out for...

LGBTQ+ Adoption and Fostering Week 2024 returns on Monday 4 March to Sunday 10 March 2024

This year's theme, 'Different Together', calls on more LGBTQ+ people from ethnically diverse backgrounds to consider adoption and fostering. Throughout the week, members of the LGBTQ+ community and people from ethnically diverse backgrounds are sharing their stories and personal clips about their journeys to parenting and caring. [Find out more on our website.](#)

LGBTQ+
adoption &
fostering week
2024

Top facts! In England, in 2023...

- [1 in 5 adoptions were to same-sex couples](#) accounting for 600 out of 2,960 adoptions. This was the highest number on record in England and the highest proportion for any one year
- [there were 83,840 looked-after children](#). This was an increase of 2% from 2022. About three in 10 of these children (29%) are from ethnically diverse backgrounds

From Monday 18 March to Sunday 24 March it's Neurodiversity Celebration Week

There are [24 free events](#) throughout the week. Over 80 speakers will be coming together to share their lived experiences across a variety of neurodiversity topics, along with the expertise of professionals and advocates in the field. And guess what? They're all free of charge, recorded and open to everyone. [You can book the free events through the interactive calendar on the Neurodiversity Celebration Week website](#)

ARFID: If your child is a picky eater, they could be scared of food

ARFID, stands for avoidant restrictive food intake disorder, meaning children, young people and adults avoid many different foods.

The [BBC news](#) has recently highlighted the huge challenges of living with and supporting the eating disorder 'ARFID', a common co-occurring condition for those who have trauma, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) or Autism. [Find out more on our website.](#)

Free Outdoor Employment Programme training young people to become an outdoor activity instructor

[Outdoor Employment Programme](#) is an entirely free programme that trains young people aged 16 to 25, who lack direction to become an outdoor activity instructor in a variety of outdoor activities including kayaking, canoeing, sailing, climbing and high ropes. [Find out more on the Young Bristol website.](#)

If your young person is interested please get in touch with Phil on [0117 929 2513](tel:0117 929 2513) or email ph@youngbristol.com

Reminder: Exclusive tickets for "Ask the Expert" Clinical Psychologist Dr Cassie Jackson

Limited tickets are available for **"Ask the Expert" Clinical Psychologist Dr Cassie Jackson**. [Supporting strategies for FASD:](#)

- **Monday 29 April, 8:15pm to 9:15pm**
- For more information and to join the mailing list please email FASD Hub South West: fasd.southwest@gmail.com
- Part 2 of a session focussed on parents questions around mental and physical health problems including addiction, anxiety, depression, learning difficulties and relationship issues.

Visit our website to [find out about future sessions that FASD South West have planned.](#)

Reminder: Free family breaks and activities

We know all too well how challenging a full-time caring role can be, so a few days away with a partner, friend or child can work wonders. A **free** family break could be just what you need...

Give yourself a breather and time and space to look after your own wellbeing. [Adopt South West parents recommend several free short breaks and activities for 2024.](#)

If you are a carer, visitor attractions and leisure facilities often offer significant discounts to you and the person you care for. [Visit our website to find some of the discounts you might be able to get.](#)

Source: FASD Hub South West

Coming soon...

When we have confirmed new activities, we'll post them online. Keep checking our [Facebook channel and website](#) for school holiday events!

Please contact us - out of hours support

Our advice and support line opening hours are:

- **Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays**
- **9am to 1pm**
- **[0345 155 1076](tel:03451551076)**

If you feel you need support, don't hesitate to contact us anytime by emailing adoptsouthwestsupport@devon.gov.uk or by calling 0345 155 1076 from 9am to 1pm, Monday to Friday

Who to call in an emergency

If you need urgent support and it is out of hours, or over the holidays when the offices are closed, you will need to contact the local council out of hours/emergency duty team for the area you live in. The numbers are:

- **Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly: [01208 251300](tel:01208251300)**
- **Devon: [0345 600 0388](tel:03456000388)**
- **Plymouth: [01752 346984](tel:01752346984)**
- **Somerset: [0300 123 23 27](tel:03001232327)**
- **Torbay: [0300 456 4876](tel:03004564876)**

We hope you find the information in this newsletter useful and [please let us know](#) if you have any thoughts on how we can improve it. We'd love to hear from you, formally or informally.

Remember you can also stay up to date by regularly checking the [events page on our website](#) and [follow us on Facebook](#).

Take care,

Mark Berry

Operations Manager Adoption Support, Adopt South West

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