

# Sandwell Foster Carers

24 AUGUST 2020

Welcome to your newsletter!

I hope that you are all continuing to keep safe and well and that you have been enjoying the overall good weather that we've been having. It's hard to believe that it's nearly September and I can imagine how busy you all are, preparing children and young people to go back to school in the next couple of weeks.

It's **'back to school'** that I want to focus on first this month. If you haven't already seen it, our colleagues in the Council have provided the below information this week:

## ***Sandwell Council offers back to school advice and support***

*With children due back to school in a few weeks, Sandwell Council has set up a dedicated website for parents and young people.*

*The website has a number of questions and answers as well as links to organisations who can help and support families with the return to school. The website can be found at: [www.sandwell.gov.uk/backtoschool](http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/backtoschool).*

*Schools are working hard and planning for the return of all pupils for the autumn term and are making sure they are ready to welcome children back in September.*

*Councillor Joyce Underhill, cabinet member for best start in life, said: "Most children and young people will have been away from school for six months, so it is important parents and children get ready to return this September."*

*Our team has done a wonderful job in supporting schools throughout this difficult time. We will continue to offer support to schools as they plan to fully reopen.*

*It is important parents and carers talk to the children and young people to prepare them for school."*

*Deputy leader, Councillor Maria Crompton, added: "I have no doubt, the majority of children can't wait to get back to learning in the classroom and to see their friends but there will be some who feel anxious about this."*

*I encourage families to look on the website where there is some really useful advice and details of the support on offer to all."*

*The website will continue to be updated as government advice is received.*

*Sandwell families can visit [www.sandwell.gov.uk/backtoschool](http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/backtoschool) for full details.*

## **Welcome to our new Managers!**

I'm delighted to welcome our new Registered Manager – Andrew Logie, Service Manager - Stuart Lance-Pencheon and Team Manager - Mike Tomkinson. I'll let them tell you a bit about themselves:



Hi everyone, my name is Andy Logie and I joined Sandwell Children's Trust in late February as an Interim Service Manager in the Children in Care and Care Leaver's Service. I moved to my new permanent role as Registered Fostering Manager a few weeks ago and it's great to be here! My social care background covers frontline child protection, children in care, fostering, adoption, and children's homes. I'm really excited to join the Trust as a permanent member of staff and I'm looking forward to working with my new team in Fostering along with all of yourselves. I look forward to meeting you soon!



Hi all, my name is Stuart Lance-Pencheon and I am a permanent Service Manager in the Children in Care team. I joined Sandwell a couple of weeks ago from Coventry where I was a Team Manager in the Looked After Children and Permanency team. I have experience in care proceedings, long term fostering and adoption work. Previously I have worked in fostering teams and so hope I have developed a holistic view of a child's experience whilst being looked after. I am a strong believer in working in partnership with children and their families/carers to ensure that their views are heard and acted upon wherever possible. Outside of work I enjoy cycling and running and also have a young family that keep me on my toes! I look forward to meeting and working with you over the coming months.



Hi, my name is Mike Tomkinson and I have been working in social care for the past 20 years and I am very excited to have been given the opportunity to manage the Fostering recruitment and assessment team in Sandwell. As a qualified Social Worker, I have worked in a number of different service areas for the Local Authority as well as working for an independent fostering agency and starting my own foster carer recruitment marketing agency. My last role was as a Quality Assurance manager in a residential parenting assessment centre.

In 2013 I was asked by my Director to consider a secondment opportunity to the Fostering and Adoption team in Coventry with my brief, to 'Recruit more foster carers and adoptive parents'. Having no prior knowledge of fostering or adoption regulations or marketing, I jumped at the chance to learn new skills and enhance my career. It was during this secondment that I fell in love with fostering and discovered the amazing selfless work that carers do every day, for the benefit of the children and young people they look after. It's a tough job, but so rewarding. I was a foster carer myself for 10 years, looking after many children on an emergency and respite basis. I believe that these experiences put me in a positive position to be able to make comment about fostering from 'both sides of the fence'.

In my spare time I enjoy going to the gym, spin classes, walking my westie 'Bounty' and I'm a 20-year supporter of the Coventry Blaze Ice Hockey team!

I look forward to meeting you all in due course and 'Thank You' for the continued work you do in making a difference to the children and young people of Sandwell.

## Fostering Forum

Our fostering forums are going really well, and I want to share some positive feedback that I've received:



Hi everyone! For those of you that don't know me, I'm Debbie Locke and I am the Named Nurse for Looked After Children.

I was excited at the launch of the fostering forum as I feel it provides a great link between our valued foster carers and all other professionals who are pertinent in assisting our children and young people in care to reach their full potential. Our LAC health team are keen to know how we can support children, young people and foster carers in the best way possible and I feel the forum will enable us in establishing this and finding new avenues of working together effectively.

Our next virtual fostering forum is scheduled to take place on Friday 18 September 2020 between 10:00 and 12:00. We would love you to join us. If you're available, please drop us an [email](#) and we'll send you an invitation! If you're not available to attend but would like to raise a question at the forum, please feel free to [email](#) us and we will get back to you.

Before I go, our colleagues at Adoption@Heart have been in touch and have asked us to share the below information with you all:



*Adoption@Heart is following Government guidance and quickly adapting the way they provide services to ensure that those interested in becoming adoptive parents are still able to proceed, and that support services can continue.*

*The adoption agency has seen a significant rise in the number of enquiries from people wanting to find out more about adopting a child during the coronavirus pandemic.*

*Since lockdown began in March, more than 200 people have come forward to express their interest in adoption – and the enquiries keep coming in every day.*

*The Regional Adoption Agency for the Black Country – which provides adoption services for Wolverhampton, Dudley and Walsall Council as well as Sandwell Children's Trust, is keen to raise awareness of adoption and find homes for children currently waiting to be adopted.*

*Anyone can adopt, whether they are single, living together, married, a same sex couple, in employment or not working, or already have children or not. Potential adopters must legally be a UK resident and have been so for at least 12 months, as well as being aged 21 or over.*

*They should ideally have a spare bedroom and be able to provide a stable home for a child until adulthood and beyond.*

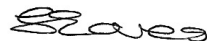
*Virtual information events are held every two weeks and are the perfect opportunity for prospective adopters to find out more and have your questions answered.*

*For information and to register for an event, please visit [www.adoptionatheart.org.uk](http://www.adoptionatheart.org.uk), call 0800 073 0597 or email [info@adoptionatheart.org.uk](mailto:info@adoptionatheart.org.uk).*



Whatever you're doing over the next few weeks, I hope that you get the opportunity to enjoy what will probably be the last of the nice weather, and good luck with back to school preparations!

I'll speak to you again in September. Take care and stay safe.



**Shanti Eaves**

**Head of Service, Children in Care, Care Leavers and Fostering**

**DON'T FORGET TO CONTACT US! IT'S YOUR NEWSLETTER!**

This is your newsletter, so do you know about any great fostering resources, or perhaps just an article or web link you want to share? Anything that could be useful to fellow foster carers – we'll help you let them know. Or if you have an idea, comment or request about fostering in general or what should be in your newsletter, contact your allocated Supervising Social Worker or email us at

[Fostering\\_Info@sandwellchildrenstrust.org](mailto:Fostering_Info@sandwellchildrenstrust.org)

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