

Sandwell Foster Carers

OCTOBER 2020

Welcome to your newsletter!

I hope that you are all keeping safe and well as we continue to live through such unprecedented times. As we turned the clocks back a week ago, I couldn't help but think about the long, dark, cold days ahead of us all and the impact that this may have on our wellbeing. The importance of keeping in touch and looking out for each other has never been so important. Please remember that we are here for you as well as the children and young people that you care for. Please contact your Supervising Social Worker if there is anything at all that you need any assistance with.

Feedback from our Ofsted Fostering Assurance Visit – 20 and 21 October 2020

You may have heard that we received a visit (albeit virtual) from Ofsted last week. It was a 'no notice' Assurance Visit and Ofsted were interested in finding out the following:

- that we are providing good care
- that we are keeping children safe
- that our leadership and management of the agency is both robust and effective

Here's Andy Logie, Fostering Registered Manager to tell you a little bit more about the visit:

The Inspection Team was led by Clive Lucas and he was accompanied by Angela Weston (on Tuesday only) and Jacqui Malcolm. Excellent team work across the service and the rest of the Trust gave the inspectors well evidenced assurance in all areas and so they leave us confident in the knowledge that we are making positive progress against our improvement plans.

They told us that:

- *Our children are well cared for and that Supervising Social Workers are focused on children as well as carers*
- *We have provided good support throughout the pandemic including food parcels, regular carers newsletters and individual risk assessments*

- *We have strong leadership and management that is evidenced through the positive feedback provided by our staff*

Most importantly, they told us that we know our children well. We know that we are on an improvement journey and it was good to hear Ofsted feeding back about the things that we already know, and are doing something about:

- *Improve communication with fostering panel members*
- *Work with foster carers to ensure that they pass vital information to us in a timely manner*
- *Continue with the good work already started in respect of training and TSD for our carers*

This is all good evidence that we know ourselves well as an organisation, as well as knowing our children and you, our carers.

The hard work and commitment of our staff and you, our foster carers, to the children of Sandwell has been recognised by Ofsted and we are well on the way to 'GOOD' at our next inspection.

A message from Balwant Bains – Executive Head of the Virtual School

I write to you following the Prime Minister's announcement of a new national lockdown starting Thursday 5 November. It is good news that schools remain open and continue to operate with the aim of keeping their community's safe. This will give our children focus and stability during these challenging times.

Some of you may have already experienced some of the disruption that comes from having confirmed cases within schools; it is understandable that the announcement of a new lockdown will be very worrying for many children, carers/parents, and staff. Be assured that schools are following the very best guidance given and that there is a commitment that examinations will go ahead next summer.

To support you and your child's mental well-being over the coming months, we have compiled a range of local and national support services below.

- **Kooth:** www.kooth.com - provide free and anonymous online counselling for children 11 to 18.
- **No Panic:** www.nopanic.org.uk - information for sufferers and carers of people with Panic, Anxiety, phobia and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- **Helping Hands:** <https://www.family-action.org.uk/> Tel: 07881265320 - supporting parents/carers with children with suspected or diagnosed ADHD or Autism Spectrum Disorder. Also offering parenting programmes and support.

Watch out for a new version of our logo!

We wanted to make our logo more noticeable as we are commissioning some new road signs with Sandwell Children's Trust Branding and having advertising put on some of Sandwell Council's vehicle fleet.

We wanted something bold bright and eye catching that works against a plain background, without losing the recognition of the Trust's main logo. Looking at some of the best examples of branding from other fostering services, we knew that what we wanted was a block of colour that would really stand out and 'lift' our logo when set against a plain background.

We came up with some rough draft concepts in-house as a guide to the kind of thing we wanted. Then we went back to the design company who developed the Trust's original logo and asked them to come up with some ideas, using the Trust's official colour palette. Looking at the options, it was pretty much universally decided that there were three options that fulfilled the brief.

Having shortlisted these three designs, we shared them with you all to get your views. From your responses there was a clear winner, which is this design:



This version of our logo will feature on traffic signs and Sandwell Council vehicle liveries as well as in future publicity online and around the borough.

Thanks to everyone who took part in choosing this design. We hope you'll be seeing it a lot around Sandwell!

Fostering Marketing



Talking of seeing our new logo around Sandwell... we're so proud to introduce our new roadside marketing on Wood Green Road in Wednesbury. We hope that you like it!

We will be shouting about our new venture on Twitter and Facebook so don't forget to give us a 'like' and a 'share'

whenever possible please!

Learning and Development

We hope that you enjoyed the first edition of the 'Info Burst' from our Learning and Development Team last month. The next edition is available now as an attachment to this newsletter. The document will provide you with the most up to date training information available to you all.

A Message from Milli McKetty-Campbell, Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer

This month is Black History Month and it's a great opportunity to reflect on the importance of how we appropriately support young people in our care to develop a positive sense of self.

Black History Month is a small window to highlight the roles of various Black individuals who have contributed positively to the development of society and to remember the journey which is often omitted or filtered from mainstream media and curriculum. As we care for children and young people from the Black and Ethnic Minority Communities in a difficult climate, with pressures such as social media, it is important that we champion the importance of their heritage as a positive and important part of their whole identity.

We have in our care children from Eastern Europe, African, Asian, African Caribbean and a multitude of other backgrounds and it is important to open up discussions about race, identity, racism and discrimination alongside the practical day to day care that we provide. Providing appropriate information and support around the nuances in hair, skin and food are the surface level but we are also responsible for supporting the emotional wellbeing of the children and young people as we prepare them for leaving our care as adults.

Discussions about identity, race and discrimination can be difficult for us all, however foster carers need to be enabled and supported to engage in these discussions confidently with the children and young people in our care. It is important that we all reflect, recognise and challenge our own biases (yes, we all have them) and be aware that children are intuitive, curious and sometimes more able and willing to have these discussions than we realise. We do not always know the answers and that's okay. Acknowledging this can enable discussion which leads to learning more and understanding how best to support families.

How can we do it?

We can explore food from other countries/cultures and festivals. Reflecting on the toys, puzzles and the resources we have in our homes to ensure they represent diversity both in our culture and others. Being positive role models for the young in our care. Promoting self-care, positive self-identity and openness to learn.

This year has been an eventful one, especially with the effects of Covid-19 on our communities, the issues around the Windrush Generation and the fallout after the murder of George Floyd. These events can be used as an opportunity to learn more and share this in supporting our young people.

There is a wide variety of resources available, I have used the following web links and resources: UNICEF has produced an article with ideas about how to talk to the children in your care about racism: <https://www.unicef.org/parenting/talking-to-your-kids-about-racism>

The Red Card is the UK's leading anti-racism charity. Resource packs and activities are available on their website: <https://www.theredcard.org/resources-and-activities>

Booktrust put together a reading list for Black History Month 2020. It includes examples of non-fiction, fiction, picture books and young adult novels that can be enjoyed by children of all ages: <https://www.booktrust.org.uk/booklists/b/black-history-month/>

Bello Collective has collated podcasts, featuring a range of experts, for both parents and children. They include young activists and some lively dance tracks: <https://bellocollective.com/8-podcasts-that-help-you-talk-to-kids-about-race-e5a4b639ac3f>

Add these to your links, they are good watches!

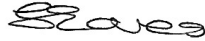
<https://www.channel4.com/programmes/the-school-that-tried-to-end-racism>

<https://www.channel4.com/programmes/the-talk>

The internet is a great place to start and don't be afraid to ask for support, that is what we are here for! *See you soon, Milli.*



As I said at the start of the newsletter, please remember that your Supervising Social Worker is always here to provide any help, support and advice that you may need. Please continue to take care and stay safe. I look forward to speaking to you again in November.



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
