

# Sandwell Foster Carers

**MARCH 2021**

Welcome to your newsletter!

It's hard to believe that the last newsletter was in January in the depths of winter and now we're entering the beautiful spring season! You will notice that the information that we provide you with each month is now coming from myself and Andy Logie, Registered Fostering Manager (we hope you like the picture at the end of the newsletter!)

We hope you find the information that we've included this month helpful and informative.

## **April Coffee Morning**

Our monthly virtual coffee mornings are open to everyone. It's just a chance to get together and have a bit of fun (coffee and cake are optional!) and catch up without it being a formal meeting. Normally we run the coffee mornings on the first Friday of the month, but as that's the Good Friday Bank Holiday in April, we're moving it forward to Thursday 1 April, still at the same time, from 10:30 to 11:30.

We'll be doing another quiz – just for fun! Can anyone beat our reigning champions Judie and Bill I wonder? All you have to do to join us on MS Teams is contact [Lynn Jones](mailto:lynn_jones@sandwellchildrenstrust.org) [lynn\\_jones@sandwellchildrenstrust.org](mailto:lynn_jones@sandwellchildrenstrust.org) for the meeting link. Brew up and join us – it'll be lovely to see you!

After that we revert back to the first Friday of the month, so May's coffee morning will be on Friday 7 May from 10:30 to 11:30.

## **Recruitment update**

We're continuing our online recruitment campaign and we would like to thank everyone who 'likes' or 'shares' our messages on Facebook – it really does help to spread the word. So, if we pop up on your phone, please do give us a thumbs up and if you're not already following us, you can find us here <https://www.facebook.com/sandwellchildrenstrust>

Also, a big 'thank-you' to everyone who's got involved with our online information events – you're always the stars of the show! Our next virtual information events are on Thursday 15 April at 19:00 and Saturday 22 May at 11:00.

### **Support Group meetings**

Due to the Easter holidays our next Support Group is on 12 May from 10:00 – 12:00. We're also running an extra information session about tax and benefits for foster carers from 13:00 – 15:00. This will be a chance for you to ask any questions about your current tax paperwork. To join either meeting contact [Lynn Jones](mailto:lynn_jones@sandwellchildrenstrust.org) [lynn\\_jones@sandwellchildrenstrust.org](mailto:lynn_jones@sandwellchildrenstrust.org) for the MS Teams meeting link.

If you haven't been to one of our sessions yet, please come and join us soon. We've had some very positive feedback as all attendees are finding the session very useful!

### **Foster Care Fortnight**

This year's Foster Care Fortnight run by the Fostering Network starts on Monday 10 May and runs until Sunday 23 May. We'll be supporting the national campaign as usual, which this year has the theme 'Why We Care'. If anyone would like to take part in the campaign, telling us why you care either as a short-written piece with a photo or a video clip for us to use on social media, get in touch with [Brian McKinstrie](mailto:brian_mckinstrie@sandwellchildrenstrust.org) [brian\\_mckinstrie@sandwellchildrenstrust.org](mailto:brian_mckinstrie@sandwellchildrenstrust.org) or talk to your Supervising Social Worker. We look forward to hearing from you!

### **Holiday Plans and Risk Assessments**

As the weather warms and the government's road map out of lockdown progresses many of us will think of foreign holidays. The current government advice is that no one should be thinking of booking foreign holidays and this too is the position that we're taking in the Trust. However, should carers decide to book holidays in the hope that they go ahead as planned we will be following the Covid-19 risk assessment process used last Summer. Please tell your Supervising Social Worker and child's Social Worker of your plans and ask for the risk assessment document to be completed in good time. And remember – staycations are good too!

### **Encouraging carers to have vaccinations**

You will, by now, know that we gained approval to give all of our carers and adults in their household the Covid-19 vaccine. Take up has been strong, but not all of you have gone ahead and booked a

vaccination slot yet. If you haven't done so already, we would encourage you to book your vaccination as soon as possible.

### **Contact / family time in community settings**

As the road map out of lockdown progresses your child in care will be able to have contact and family time in the community. As this is an expectation of our work with children and families you will have to facilitate this contact as required. Now we know that Covid-19 doesn't transmit well in the open air – so this is a positive safe move – however, I'd still like to think all of you are protected by the vaccine (see above). Bearing in mind it takes at least 3 weeks post jab to build immunity and community contact will start in the second half of April, time is running out to be safe and healthy. So once again, if not already done, please book a vaccination slot.

### **Health update**

Health assessments for children in care are happening regularly and efficiently again, so many thanks to our colleagues of the LAC nursing service. I am also happy to report that dental checking is slowly but surely coming back online – so please contact your child in care's dental practice to get them booked in for a check-up.

Strengths and difficulties questionnaires are landing in your inboxes now and over the next few days – can you get these filled in and back to us as soon as possible please?

### **Update on Frances leaving and new Chief Executive Emma Taylor joining us on 12 April**

Frances Craven, our Chief Executive since the Trust went live, retired from public service last Friday (19 March). She will be greatly missed, and I hope you will join me in wishing her well.

Emma Taylor takes over the reins on 12 April, joining us from Cheshire East Children's Services. I will ask her to tell you more about herself in an upcoming edition.

### A 'thank you' message from Judy Maynard, Foster Carer

*We just wanted to show our appreciation of these wonderful 'Letter Box packs'. They have been a lovely surprise every time we have received them and have been so useful especially when home schooling. The pencils are thicker than standard pencils with a triangular shape which is much easier for the children to hold. The people who have organised them have been very thoughtful when putting them together, they always include a notebook and either markers, coloured pencils or crayons plus handy cases to keep them safe and encourage our little ones to look after them.*



*Reading before bed is a valued part of our routine and the books which they pick are educational or sensory and age appropriate. Our grandson loves collecting the little finger puppets and often has fun playing with them. What else can I say but a massive "Thank You" for taking the time to arrange these for our little ones, they really are appreciated.*



### A message from Balwant Bains, Head Teacher Sandwell Virtual School

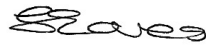
West Midlands Virtual Schools have been in touch with details of an array of sports activities for you, children and young people to get involved in throughout the Easter break. We've uploaded the information to our website but you can also view it [here](#). Have fun staying active together!

### Learning and Development

The latest edition of the 'Info Burst' from our Learning and Development Team is attached to this newsletter and is also available on the internet. The document will provide you with the most up to date training information available to you all.



Please remember that your Supervising Social Worker is always here to provide any help, support and advice that you may need. Please take care, stay safe and we'll speak to you all again next month.



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



**Andy Logie**  
**Registered Fostering Manager**

### **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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