

# Sandwell Foster Carers

**APRIL 2021**

Welcome to your newsletter!

I hope that you're all keeping safe and well and have had the chance to enjoy the beautiful weather which has kindly coincided with the easing of lockdown measures.

We've got an information packed newsletter again for you this month, we hope you find it helpful and informative.

## **Welcome to Emma Taylor, Sandwell Children's Trust Chief Executive**



As I start in my new role with Sandwell Children's Trust I wanted to introduce myself directly to you as part of our Sandwell Family. My first two weeks have flown by and I couldn't have hoped for a better start. Everyone has made me feel so welcome and it's been a pleasure to experience first-hand the Black County hospitality that I have heard so much about.

It has been good to meet with so many staff and partners. As with any area, there are challenges and I am getting a good understanding of these; however, I can definitely feel a desire to keep improving and do well across the Trust. I have particularly enjoyed the individual telephone conversations that I've had with a range of people across the Trust. I want to get in touch and talk with as many people as possible to help increase my knowledge and understanding of Sandwell.

In my first week we held two staff briefing sessions as part of my introductions to everyone. If you've spoken to any of your Supervising Social Workers or children's Social Workers who attended the sessions, you may have already got a sense of what influences my own approach and how I'd like *us* to shape the next stage of our 'adventure' together. The things that are important are our people, our practice and our partners. We are all part of a system where we all have a part to play - at the core for us all in the Trust is the ambition and aspirations we have for all our children - that they are not only safe, but can grow up to achieve what they choose, no matter what their childhood experiences may have been. As our foster carers, you play an invaluable role and I've been pleased to hear that our

foster carer family is growing, meaning that we can place more of our children locally in their home Borough.

Personally, I took a lot of messages away from the sessions and I am particularly keen to make the most of the Sandwell Family feel that I've already picked up here. One of the things that stood out was our need to listen and I am inviting everyone- including our foster carers- to talk openly and constructively about anything relating to our Sandwell Family – issues and concerns but - equally importantly – ideas and suggestions as we go forward.

I hope to speak to you at some point soon as I continue to get to know people, I may even get to share a coffee- maybe virtual- with you very soon! I'm sure that you will join me in sharing my excitement as we embark on our new 'adventure' together!

### **A message from Mike Tomkinson, Recruitment and Assessment Manager**

As you know each year the Fostering Network runs a national recruitment campaign throughout the month of May to encourage more foster carers to look after the country's most vulnerable children.

This year's theme is 'Why we Care' and we can't wait to shout about **Why We Care**.

As well as the usual poster and Facebook campaigns, we are also looking to launch our brand-new look website, crammed full of useful information and so much easier to find what you need.

For the next part, we need your help...!

We would like to showcase some of the amazing work that you are all doing and would love to hear your **#whywecare** stories. We are asking foster carers and Trust staff to create a short 20 second video clip (max) that we can use on social media to show the whole of Sandwell, **Why We Care**.

An example could be...

I love seeing how much more confident James is now, He always meets me at the school gate with a big smile on his face...that's '**Why We Care**'...

It doesn't have to be long, or staged, no props or specialist lighting. Just you, your phone and your message of **#whywecare**. (Please remember not to include any children in the video or those that have not given consent to use on social media)

I'm sure you all have lots of amazing stories so if you can help, that would be great. If you forward your video clips to [brian\\_mckinstrie@sandwellchildrenstrust.org](mailto:brian_mckinstrie@sandwellchildrenstrust.org) or you can text them to 07825 906561.

Thank you all so much for your continued help and support and keep doing the fantastic work you are doing. I look forward to hearing from you!

### **Support Group meetings**

Connected carers support groups take place on the first Wednesday of every month from 10:00 – 12:00

5 May

2 June

7 July

No meeting in August

1 September

6 October

3 November

1 December

Mainstream carers support groups take place on the second Wednesday of every month from 10:00 – 12:00

12 May

9 June

14 July

No meeting in August

8 September

13 October

10 November

8 December

If you would like to attend any of the above, please contact [lynn\\_jones@sandwellchildrenstrust.org](mailto:lynn_jones@sandwellchildrenstrust.org) and she will send you a Microsoft Teams appointment. We look forward to seeing you there!

## 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.

## Foster Talk

We are proud to confirm annual membership to 'Foster Talk Household Memberships' - ensuring foster families have access to a wide range of independent support and benefits including;

- ☐ Legal Expenses Insurance Cover
- ☐ Arrest and Interview Assistance
- ☐ 24 Hour Legal Advice Helpline
- ☐ Tax and Accountancy Helpline
- ☐ 24 Hour Counselling Helpline
- ☐ 24 Hour Medical Information Helpline
- ☐ Education Support Helpline
- ☐ Social Work Support Helpline
- ☐ Personal Finance Advice
- ☐ Quarterly Fostering Magazine
- ☐ Access to Special Offers and Discounts
- ☐ On-line Carer Forums
- ☐ Have YOUR Say.... links to fostering consultations

Membership Year: 1st April 2021 to 1st April 2022

We've attached the Foster Talk Membership Guide Booklet along with the 'TalkOutMag' Article that we hope you will find helpful.

Useful Foster Talk numbers to save:

**0844 800 3880 – 24 Hours**

**0344 800 3880 – Free from mobile**

**0121 758 5013 – General/Office**

## Changes in the Children in Care Teams

We are currently in the process of redesigning our Children and Care and Care Leavers Teams.

Our aim is to offer an area of focus, specialism and expertise to our young people. We aim to focus on permanency and good quality life work for our younger children and for the over 14's there will be a focus of good quality Pathway Plans, understanding the risks associated with adolescence and preparing for transition to adulthood. In addition to this there will be a continued focus on good health, education, family time and building lifelong links.

There will be 3 under 14 teams and 2 over 14 teams. We have identified the 5 team managers for each team:

Team 1 (Under 14's): Paula Jarrett

Team 2 (Under 14's): Marie Shepperd

Team 3 (Under 14's): Laura Martin

Team 4 (Over 14's): Rochelle Blake

Team 5 (Over 14's): Lorraine Salmon.

All of our Team Managers are permanent members of staff. Each team will have 7 Social Workers and at least 1 Social Care Assistant (full-time equivalent). We are in the process of working through expressions of interests from our staff to identify who will be in each team.

Over the next 4 weeks, Social Workers will inform their young people and carers if there will be any changes. Social workers will continue to work with the children in their area. There will be a change for some young people but staff are not leaving therefore young people and carers will still be able to approach their previous workers to clarify any questions.

For our Care Leavers we will be creating an additional team. This will mean there are 2 dedicated Care Leavers Teams, with 2 permanent Team Managers:

Care Leavers, Team 1: Claire Tate

Care Leavers, Team 2: Rebecca Greenhouse

The 2 Service Managers in Children in Care and Care Leavers will remain the same, they will be responsible for the following areas:

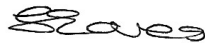
Stuart Lance-Pencheon: Team 1, 2 and 3 (Under 14's), the Contact Centre and the Life Story Project.

Michelle O'Farrell: Team 4 and 5 (Over 14's) and Care Leavers, Team 1 and 2.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact your Supervising Social Worker or the allocated worker.



As always, your Supervising Social Worker is there 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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