

Sandwell Foster Carers

MAY 2021

Welcome to your newsletter!

It's hard to believe that we're already approaching the end of May and what will hopefully be a warm, sunny and dry bank holiday weekend!

As we make tentative steps towards a new normal, I hope that you and the children and young people that you care for are all keeping safe and well.

As always, we've got an information packed newsletter for you this month!

Welcome to Lynne Andrews – Placements Officer



I joined Sandwell in 2017 where I started work in Early Help in Tipton. After a short while I moved to support Heads of Service and it was here that I was able to learn all about the different areas of Children's Social Care. I am hoping that this knowledge will help me to be able to find the right match for our children with our Sandwell carers. When I'm not working I like to play golf, weather permitting! You might have heard the phrase "golf is a good walk spoilt" – I can agree with this phrase wholeheartedly. However, the attached photo shows my "hole in one" which will bring any budding golfer back to the game time and time again. I look forward to getting to know you all over the coming weeks and months.

Foster Care Fortnight 2021

We had a really busy Foster Care Fortnight as part of the Fostering Network's national campaign. A huge 'thank you' to everyone who contributed, either with videos for social media or by liking, sharing or re-tweeting our posts. It all helps and as we grow our Facebook and Twitter profiles we are reaching more and more people. That means we have a better chance of finding more good people to join our fostering family.

But...just because Foster Care Fortnight is over, our work to find the right people to foster for Sandwell certainly isn't over. We've relaunched our website with new pages to make it easier to

navigate round, we're running a new advert on Facebook, which is already reaching new potential foster carers – some of you might be seeing it.



To keep up the momentum it always helps to have you contributing. People who may be thinking of fostering love to hear from current foster carers. It's no surprise that our most successful videos from Foster Care Fortnight were from our foster carers. Whether it's joining in with future campaigns, being interviewed for a case study for our website, attending recruitment events or sharing a particular story for us to post

on social media, there are loads of ways to get involved. If you want to help us to find new foster carers, just let your Supervising Social Worker know and we'll get in touch.

Holidays Abroad

As the Government's Roadmap out of lockdown continues thoughts turn to the prospect of holidays abroad once more. While it is possible to travel subject to the traffic lights system of COVID safety, the Trust's stance is still to recommend staycations as there is less uncertainty associated with a UK based holiday. We have seen guidance change almost overnight in some instances, so 'green' countries could become 'amber' or 'red' without any forewarning.

Nevertheless, if you do plan to go abroad we can approve 'green' country visits only and the child's social care team must complete a travel risk assessment in advance of you making a booking just in case travel is not approved.

The government guidance is here, so please refer to it for the latest updates:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus>

Community Contact for Children and Young People

June 21st is not too far away now, and it looks like the government will relax all COVID restrictions as planned – however, the so called Indian variant causes ongoing concern and uncertainty. We have been encouraging parents and family members coming to contact to follow the guidance on handwashing and mask wearing and to cancel contact if they have coronavirus symptoms or a positive test. However, this system of expectation does not ensure that the virus isn't around those attending contact in the community.

You can order lateral flow tests online or pick them up from your local pharmacy and use them to satisfy yourself that neither you or the child attending contact has COVID. In addition, as a childcare professional yourself, I see no reason why you can't recommend this to parents and other family members attending contact, so everyone is kept as safe as possible. You can also encourage them to be vaccinated if it is available to them.

Each situation is unique, so it is hard to offer definitive advice on hand holding and hugging – use your best judgement and communicate any concerns or prior preparation recommendations you have with family and/or the contact workers if present. Carry hand sanitiser and wipes so you can keep hands, and anything touched as clean as possible. The latest guidance is accessed below and as you can see there is some discretion available to us in terms of the distance we maintain from each other:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-friends-and-family-covid-19>

Visits

As the government continues to lift restrictions, as a Fostering Service we continue to move towards a full service. This will mean Social Workers visiting face to face and completing unannounced visits in line with our statutory duties. We absolutely look forward to seeing you all in person soon!

Coffee Time – let's take a break

Just a quick reminder that our next monthly virtual coffee morning will be on **Friday 4 June at 10:30**.

As always you can request the meeting link from Lynn Jones – just drop her an email

lynn_jones@sandwellchildrenstrust.org

We know that meeting online is not ideal and several of you have already asked when we can get back to having face to face coffee mornings. Well...we are looking into it, but of course we will have to make a full risk assessment and make sure we follow the current government guidelines, because your safety has to be our priority.

Hopefully as the situation improves and we can do more in terms of socialising we can start getting back to normal. It's certainly something we would love to be able to do over the summer, so let's keep our fingers crossed!

In the meantime, it will be lovely to see some of you – even if it is virtually – next Friday, for a coffee, a quiz and a bit of fun!

Support Group meetings – a reminder...

Don't forget that connected carers support groups take place on the first Wednesday of each month virtually via Microsoft Teams from 10:00 – 12:00. We will be sending the link to join in your emails, so it is now easier than ever to join us!

On **Wednesday 2 June** we have Foster Talk coming to talk about the benefits you are entitled to as part of the subscription SCT pay on your behalf, this includes; great advice on DWP Benefits Entitlement and Tax Matters as well as Counselling.

On **Wednesday 7 July** we have SCT's Life Story workers coming to do a meet and greet to hear about all the fantastic work you do with helping the children in your care understand their history. They are also bringing tips and want to hear from you about what would help in your unique role as family and friends carers.

Future meeting dates:

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

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 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.



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
