

Sandwell Foster Carers

JUNE 2021

Welcome to your newsletter!

As we continue to live in unusual times, I hope that you and the children and young people that you care for are all keeping safe and well. I know that the rising number of positive covid cases in the Sandwell area continues to cause concern and is yet again having a negative effect on the education of children and young people. We can only hope that the vaccination rollout continues to provide protection and help us move back to some sort of normality on 19 July.

I hope that the information that we've include this month is helpful to you and I'll see you at the end of the newsletter.

Long Term Matching

We are so pleased to announce that the long-term matching panel for foster carers and the children in their forever family has begun! As you know, it is really important to children we care for to know that where they live and who they live with is secure, safe and long term.

In England long-term fostering has a formal status as a permanence option for looked after children. The child's local authority retains parental responsibility, but foster carers have greater authority to make decisions on behalf of the child and, if all parties are in agreement, meet less frequently with social workers. These changes were made in 2015 with the aim to provide better stability and a better sense of 'normal' family life for a looked after child.

Within long-term fostering, there is an expectation that the placement will continue throughout childhood until the young person leaves care and an aspiration that the relationships between the child and the foster family will endure into adulthood and indeed throughout life, on the basis of voluntary mutual attachments. This does not mean that the child will necessarily consider the fostering family as a "permanent" family to the exclusion of the birth family. One of the key advantages which long-term foster care can offer is respect for the continuing role of the birth family, and support for the child to maintain a relationship with their birth family unless this is considered detrimental to the child's interests.

In long-term placements, it is to be expected that the level of delegated authority – giving foster carers the authority to make decisions about a child – will be high, and this should be clearly established through the care planning process. In order to help ensure the success of long-term placements, it is important that long-term foster carers have access to relevant training as new issues arise. Foster carers may well need support to manage the changes in the child's needs which emerge over time, to manage changing relationships with the birth family, or to support the young person to prepare for independence, for example.

Long-term fostering placements may also require and benefit from a lower frequency of social work visits and formal review meetings (please speak to your social worker about this), although thorough support must be in place for the child and foster carer, and reviews must still take place by other means.

Is this something we should be working with you on? If so, please let your social worker know and we will consider booking you onto the panel.

Independent Review of Children's Social Care

You may already be aware of the recent independent review of social care that has been carried out by Josh MacAlister but we thought that it would be helpful to include the link to the full report here for you for future reference:

<https://childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/case-for-change.pdf>

Mind of My Own

We need your help please! Can you encourage the children and young people that you care for to use Mind of My Own to get in touch with us please? We've included two posters with this month's newsletter to provide further information if you need it:

[Mind of My Own poster 8+](#)

[Mind of My Own poster 16+](#)

Don't forget that our [Participation Team](#) are always on hand to support if required.

June - Pride Month

As you're probably aware June was Pride month and this is something we were really pleased to support. We're always keen to support the LGBTQ+ community and give out the message that fostering is open to everyone.

We've seen lots of people around the Trust displaying our Pride month email footers and screen backgrounds in meetings. We've had a very successful video on social media which was shared by Sandwell Council, reaching thousands across the borough.

It's important to keep making our support clear – being an LGBTQ+ friendly Fostering Service is something we believe in, so it doesn't just end as Pride month comes to a close. Our door is open to all and that's the message we'll be continuing to promote to all of our local communities.

Tots Talking Programme

Tots Talking is here in Sandwell and we want every parent/carer to have this wonderful, fun way of helping improve early language for our young children!

A second group of **amazing** foster carers who have just completed 8 weeks of Tots Talking, a programme developed by parents/carers to improve the language of 2 year olds and to get a head start at nursery and school.

It does this by encouraging parents/carers to use contingent language and behaviours to support children's language and communication skills.

These include turn taking, sharing the child's interests and adding onto children's comments. The programme includes research, video clips, spot the difference clips of contingent and non-contingent behaviours and language.

Every session is completed with a practical activity.

Tots Talking has been delivered through 8 online sessions that run once a week.

Each session lasts for 1 hour and 15 minutes. Tots Talking is a fantastic and fun programme!

The sessions are supported by the Tots Talking App which parents/carers use on their phone.

The App gives information to help parents/carers learn and encourage them to practice what they have learned with their child at home.

To find out more information or want to receive the training please contact:

saeeda_butt@sandwell.gov.uk or call 07769 283285

Sharon_osmond@sandwell.gov.uk or call 07880 295021

They look forward to hearing from you!

Tots Talking for foster carers who are caring for children aged 2 – 3 years.

Foster carers must attend all 8 sessions. All sessions take place online.

All dates take place on Thursday mornings 09:45 to 11:00

Session 1	16 September 2021
Session 2	23 September 2021
Session 3	30 September 2021
Session 4	7 October 2021
Session 5	14 October 2021
Session 6	21 October 2021
Session 7	4 November 2021
Session 8	11 November 2021

The Fostering Network State of the Nation Foster Carers survey

As you're probably aware we do not have membership with The Fostering Network, however, their survey is **open to all carers** irrespective of whether they are members or not. The survey is open until 11 July and they would like as many foster carers as possible to take part.

Follow this link [FC Survey](#) to help continue to improve fostering because:

- The higher the response rate, the more the issues are understood in fostering and better influence improvement. For example – The Fostering Network successfully campaigned for an extra £10m for Staying Put that has recently increased by £33m.
- The Care Review will be looking at the results to influence their work.
- Presenting findings to Ofsted inspectors to inform their inspections of fostering services.
- Inform campaigning work and organisational priorities to effectively support members.

Exclusive events to launch the results:

- These forums and events will give additional, anonymised and regional specific information from both surveys that can be used to improve your offer and services.
- Invites will only be sent to those who have provided their details through the survey.
- These events provide an opportunity to make individual, regional and national comparisons and looks at trends.
- The events will also provide networking and best practice sharing opportunities across the sector and will commence towards the end of the year.

Vouchers for foster carers:

- As a thank you for taking part, foster carers will have the opportunity to enter a free prize draw to win a voucher – one £100 voucher, two £50 vouchers and ten £25 vouchers are up for grabs!

Please take a few minutes to [take part in the survey](#).

Coffee Time – let's take a break

Just a quick reminder that our next monthly virtual coffee morning will be on **Friday 2 July at 10:30**.

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

lynn_jones@sandwellchildrenstrust.org

We'll be asking everyone if you want to carry on during the summer holidays, as we know you'll have lots of other things to do!

The extension of Covid restrictions beyond 21 June has put planning any live events back up in the air, but we're still hoping to get together before the end of the summer if possible...

It will be great to see some of you – even if it is virtually – on Friday, for a coffee, a catch-up and maybe a bit of a quiz...

Support Group meetings – a reminder...

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!

Don't forget that on **Wednesday 7 July** we have SCT's Life Story workers Deannie Harris and Trish Cox 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

14 July

No meeting in August

8 September

13 October

10 November

8 December

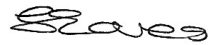
If you would like to attend any of the above, please contact lynn_jones@sandwellchildrenstrust.org and she will send you a Microsoft Teams appointment. We look forward to seeing you there!

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
