



Foster Carers Newsletter

November 2021





Welcome to your November newsletter!

We hope that you're all keeping safe and well and hope you enjoy reading this month's newsletter...

Training

Attached to the newsletter is the latest Learning and Development Info Burst containing all the details of training available to you

Training timeline – mainstream carers

Training TimeLine Mainstream Carers (including partners)



Within the first 12 months following approval
Complete
Mandatory Training
This must be repeated every
3 years

Within the first 12 months following approval
Complete
Training, Support & Development
Standards (TSD's)

Following your first review
Complete
a minimum of 3 additional training
courses per year

Training timeline – connected carers

Training TimeLine Connected Carers (including partners)



**Within the first
12 months following approval**
Complete
Mandatory Training
This must be repeated every
3 years



**Within the first
18 months following approval**
Complete
Training, Support & Development
Standards (TSD's)



Following your first review
Complete
a minimum of 3 additional training
courses per year

Mandatory Training

VIRTUAL CORE TRAINING

This training is delivered online via MS Teams or Zoom with a trainer present.

- Attachment & Child development
- Managing Challenging Behaviour: Age 4-11 AND Managing Challenging Behaviour: Age 12+
- Child Protection & Safeguarding
- Equality & Diversity
- Paediatric First Aid
- Recording & Reporting
- Safer Caring
- Understanding Exploitation

E-LEARNING CORE TRAINING

This training is available on the Foster Care Training Hub and you can work through courses independently as and when it suits you

- Attachment & Child development Fostering
- Challenging Behaviour Advanced Fostering
- Child Protection & Safeguarding Advanced
- Equality & Diversity & Cultural Competence
- First Aid Paediatric (introduction only, this must be completed face-face)
- Reporting & Recording Advanced
- Risk Management & Safer Caring
- Exploitation -TBC

← Complete/Attend either Virtual or E-learning training →

Dates and times are advertised from the Learning & Development team

Contact the Learning & Development team to create an account or request a course

Unannounced Visits



Sandwell Children's Trust is continually striving to improve the fostering service to ensure that children are safeguarded in our care. Unannounced visits are intended to be amongst other mechanisms already in place to ensure that the care being provided for any child or young person is of a high standard. Unannounced visits to Foster Carers homes are a way of the fostering service getting a better understanding of the child's lived experience within the foster home.

Unannounced visits are discussed a lot in Serious Case Reviews and the importance of them in observing an environment that has not been staged.

Here at Sandwell we try to keep our Supervising Social Workers supervising and supporting the same Foster Carers over a long period of time and do not move them around. However this can sometimes cause the Supervising Social Worker to become too familiar with the home environment and the Foster Carers. Other Fostering Services do not allow the SSW to supervise a Foster Carer for more than 2 years to prevent this familiarity, however here at Sandwell we recognise that the children and young people are already having lots of changes of their own social workers. Therefore the decision for a different Supervising Social Worker to do the unannounced visits limits the risk of familiarity and provides a different perspective of the lived experience of the child, whilst allowing the Foster Carer to keep the same SSW for longer.



Max Cards



Foster Talk have advised us that if Max Cards are lost foster carers will need to contact Foster Talk directly on 01527 836910 to advise them of this and request a replacement card. There will be a small charge of £3.00 to replace any lost Max Cards.



Appreciating the Experience and Dedication of our Connected Carers – a message from Pascelle Grewal, Team Manager.

At the recent Foster Carer Forum we talked about the amazing cohort of Connected Person Carers we have and their role within the fostering service. For those that do not know, Connected Persons Foster Carers are family and friends of the child(ren) who can no longer remain with their birth parents. The child is placed with the connected person and they then become a foster carer approved only for that specific child. This has the benefit of ensuring that the child remains with people that they know or has strong links to their parents and history, but the 'placement' is supported and supervised by the social work teams.

As Team Manager with responsibility for supervising Connected Carers I talk to lots of our carers who share so many similarities, but due to their position as a family member don't feel part of the 'fostering service' or a foster carer. I have seen how reassuring receiving support from people in the same situation can be, but as a group we need to come together more effectively and regularly to share the wealth of knowledge and experience you have.

One of our carers has kindly agreed to share his story (on the next slide). If this resonates with you I would love to hear more from you at our Connected Person Carers Support Group on Wednesday 1st December at 10pm. The Microsoft Teams link will be emailed to all carers. I will also be at the Christmas Coffee Morning on 10th December.

'There was never an option my grandkids were never going into care'

We were at a time in our lives when we had downsized and were planning regular trips to Europe, but the day we received the call to say the kids would be taken into care our world fell apart. There was never an option my grandkids were never going into care. Looking back at photos of when they were just visitors to our home I didn't realise the strong relationship I had with my grandson (he never left my side) was building foundations for the future.

The process of being assessed was hard and we never thought about 'becoming foster carers' (it must've been talked about), but all our minds could focus on was keeping our grandkids. That was the only thing we could think about and we would have done anything to ensure this happened.

The only time we could relax was when the assessment was approved, they were with us and they started to call our house 'home' saying things like 'my bedroom'. Our lives have completely changed, but for the better. I am 65 looking after young children but they have enriched our lives so much! Watching their little lives building. The children were damaged particularly the oldest. He really struggling with being around other people, but now to see him building relationship and being able to make and keep friendships is amazing. He was behind in all areas of learning at school but now he is on target or almost there with everything! So proud of him. It has also meant that they can enjoy and benefit from the rest of the family such as going for sleepovers at their aunties or when our other children come over. The rewards of that progress melts my heart.

I really welcome the idea of coming together as a carer group, virtually and face to face as we have so much to offer and we need to be a united voice.

Fostering was not what I expected and this has been hard. I am lucky that I love the learning and training so that doesn't bother me, but social work visits, changes of workers and retelling our story is frustrating. I will say that every social worker I have met has a genuinely caring nature, but consistency and them not knowing us and the circumstances is really hard.

I would also say that we were unfortunate to experience (an untrue) allegation. Before this happened I was totally naïve about allegations. I would say to ALL carers DO the training. It was very scary, but if I had done the allegations training before it happened I would have been more equipped and the experience would have been less frightening. It came out of nowhere and is something we never expected and that's why I would urge all carers to think about this. We accept that given the children's history it is not their fault and makes us love them even more.

There are lots of additional difficulties that come with being a family carer such as; family dynamics, contact demands, financial pressure of being pensioners on a limited income. But for all the negatives, this for us, has been a positive experience. The kids are a delight to me, their smiles in the morning, their thousands of questions. If grandad gets said 5000 times in a day I've under estimated. As grandparents we have a lot to offer; we are experienced, we have life skills and patience and really enjoy every second with the children.

I love them with every piece of blood cursing through my veins and I will do everything I can to give them the best future possible.

Special Guardianship Support update

We really value permanence for children and their families. Most children do not need to remain in care when they are looked after by people who can make safe decisions for them. Research and young people tell us they don't want to have social workers in their lives if this is not needed. An important part of our work is to support connected carers to find the most appropriate legal option for children to live within the family without the child remaining in care.

This is why we are developing our Special Guardianship Support service because we recognise that family carers need ongoing support even when the child is no longer in care. We will keep you updated of the on going developments, but feel free to ask any questions!

Break-time!

We would like to formally invite you to our Foster Carer – Face to Face Coffee Morning Celebration!



We call it a celebration as this is the first event that we have been able to hold face to face event since the global pandemic which has seen many of us managing through difficult periods of lockdown.

Whilst we haven't been able to celebrate all of the festivals throughout the year as we would like as well as our GOOD Ofsted judgement, we hope that you will be able to come along and share a coffee, a cake and a good chat together again.

As a result of the face to face event we will be cancelling the Virtual Coffee Morning scheduled to take place on Friday 3 December and also the carer support group scheduled for Wednesday 8 December

The Face to Face Celebration will be held on: **FRIDAY 10 DECEMBER 2021 – 10:30 - 12:30**

At:

Wednesbury Art Gallery and Museum.

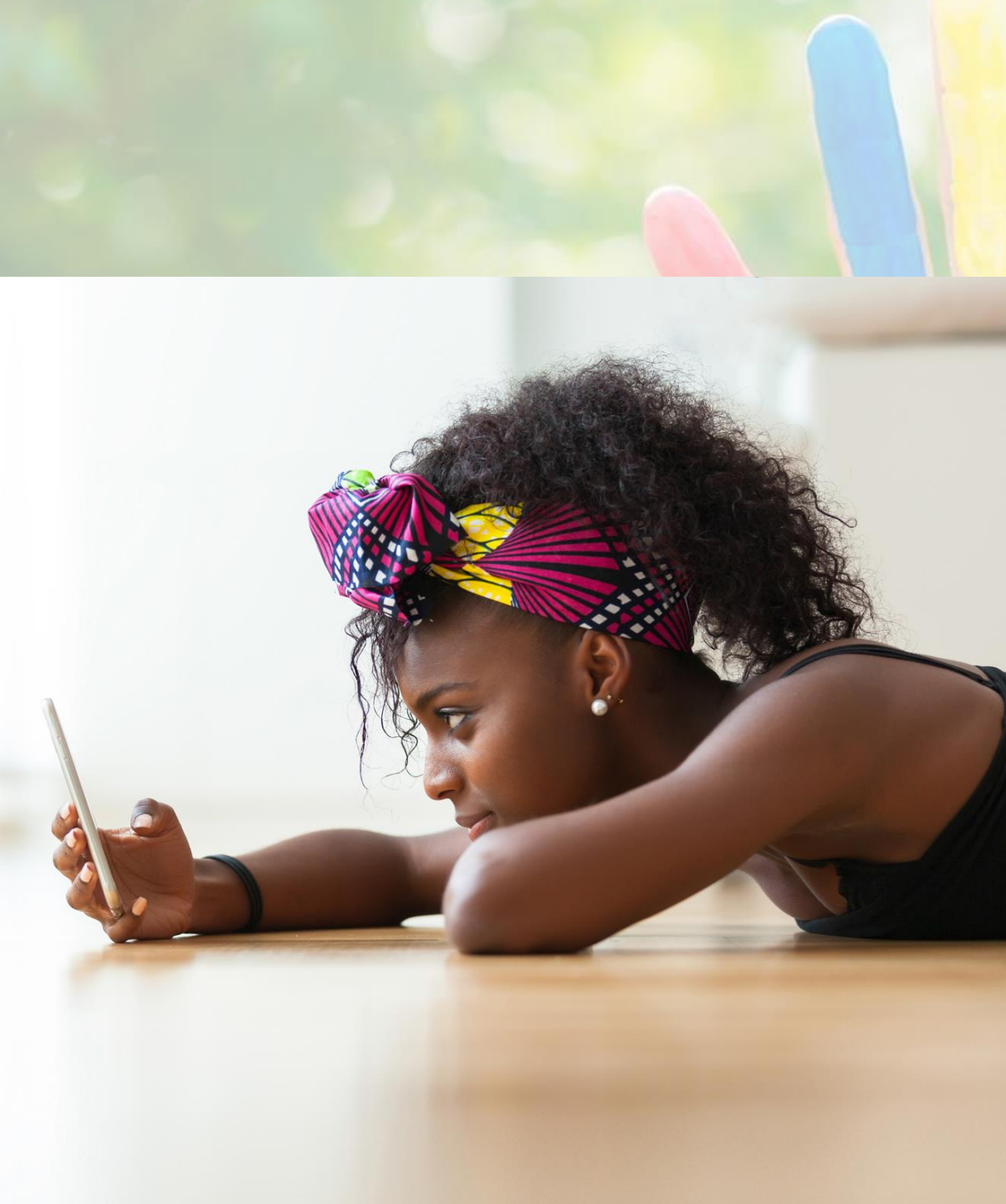
Hollyhead Road

Wednesbury

WS10 7DF

We look forward to seeing you there!





That's it for this month!



We hope that you've enjoyed this month's newsletter and don't forget that we would love to hear from you! If you know about any great fostering resources, articles or web links just let us know via email at:

Fostering_info@sandwellchildrenstrust.org

or contact your allocated Supervising Social Worker.

We look forward to hearing from you – see you next month!

