

Fostering Newsletter

Spring 2015

Message from Head of Service

Dear Foster Carer,

I am sure, like me, you will be looking forward to some longer and warmer days now that Spring is here. On my daily journey into work on my bike I certainly could benefit from some sunshine!

As well as the spring, we are entering a new financial year and are beginning to look ahead to grow our plans over the coming months. One of the most important areas we want to improve is reducing the number of moves of children in our care. Currently too many children experience placement changes, often due to challenging behaviour but sometimes down to difficulties we face in finding the right placement for children first time. One of the ways we are helping carers to manage behaviours is the course to develop social pedagogy. There is more detail within the newsletter about what has been achieved so far with the course.

We are also working closely with our colleagues in other boroughs to see where we can share training opportunities for foster carers. One of the first steps is to share our preparation of foster carers so that people don't have to wait long to start their fostering journey. In the current financial climate where we are expected to work differently this is one way where we can co-operate with other boroughs to provide better services with the resources we



have available. Zak Darwood will be in touch with you to share opportunities for training in other boroughs over the coming months.

I am also happy to confirm that the fostering allowance and fee will be rising from April 2015 in line with the Fostering Network's recommendation for London fostering agencies. This is important in ensuring that we provide financial support in line with the cost of living so you can continue to provide a good standard of care for our children. There will be separate communication to provide more detail about this in the coming weeks. Along with the work of your supervising social worker and great training opportunities, the allowance and fee is part of our package to provide support to you in your fostering role.

I hope that you have a good Easter break and look forward to seeing you at an event over the coming weeks and months.

Thanks, Nigel

Featured in this issue

- We need your views – Policy consultation
- Referral Reward scheme
- Fostering fortnight

Care in Action Update

First Care Leavers Meeting

Our first Care Leavers Group was held on 27th January where young people who attended looked at the things that had changed for them once they had left care, what impact this had on them and what they thought could have made this better or easier for them. The outcomes from this activity will be shared with others such as Heads of Service, Directors and Council members.

DCS and LM meeting

On 29th January, the Strategic Director and Lead Member for Children and Young People and the Operational Director for Social Care met with a representative from Care in Action. The young person had the opportunity to share feedback from care leavers who attended the first care leavers group, on their experiences of leaving care, the impact and to provide suggestions for support that would have helped make the transition better for them. All who attended participated in further discussions about how care leavers could be better supported in the future.



For more information on the CIA group contact Shirley Ricketts on 020 8937 3695

LAC Website Design Focus Group

On Tuesday 3rd Feb, 11 Care in Action members met with Brent Council's Web Editor and a Web Designer. A mock up design was shown to the group and the overall comments were that young people were very happy with the new layout.

Young people worked in two groups to discuss what they liked about the proposed layout and gave suggestions for any additions or improvements. The Web Editor and Designer will go away and do further work on the draft web design which will then be presented to the CIA members at a meeting in the future.

Corporate Parenting Committee

The Vice-Chair and a member of Care in Action (CIA) attended the Corporate Parenting Committee in February where they met with the Strategic Director and Lead Member for Children and Young People, senior managers and elected members. The young people gave an update on the development of a new website for looked after children and young people, and the first care leavers group meeting, sharing the outcomes of an exercise the young people participated in at this first meeting.

Referral Reward Scheme

**EARN
£500
IN CASH**

As a Brent foster carer you are eligible to take part in our Referral Reward Scheme.

The Brent Placement Service will pay a "Referral Reward" to any Brent approved foster carer who successfully recommends a friend or family member to the Service. An initial £250 is paid when the referred person is approved at panel and a further £250 following their first placement.

Referrals can be made to our recruitment number 020 8937 4538 or email fostering@brent.gov.uk – quoting 'Referral Reward'.

Terms and Conditions

- 1: To qualify for the scheme; the prospective applicant must quote the Foster Carers name during the initial enquiry stage on the telephone or first home visit with assessing social worker.

This will be cross referenced to confirm connection.
- 2: Each 'Referral Reward' is based on one household.

Household
= A single applicant

= Joint applicants living in the same household making one application.
- 3: Payment will be authorised after the referred person has been approved at panel and could take up to 14 days to reach you.
- 4: Payments will be made by payment card.
- 5: Foster carers can make as many introductions as they wish. However there is no reward payable for general enquiries. Payments will ONLY be made at the following times; after successful approval of a referred applicant and after placement of first child.
- 6: The foster carer can receive up to £500 upon the referred person being approved and subsequently taking a placement.

Social Pedagogy



After attending the first two briefing/introductory sessions held in the later part of 2014 I joined the Social Pedagogy course with a great deal of scepticism; as I felt that the approach did not appear to offer anything new in terms of enhancing my current practice. However, after participating in the first two days of the course I was pleasantly surprised by how innovative the approach actually was and how much I learnt.

The information given so far indicates an approach that involves a range of theories combined into a broader theory– which research suggests has been effective in reducing the need for restraint, reducing the numbers of children truanting and improving the experiences of those in residential care. It is also said to be effective in improving the relationship between foster carers and social workers, boosting staff morale and reducing sickness (Petrie et al, 2006: Ofsted, 2014). All of which is encouraging and easily transferable to the fostering setting.

The tutors, Thure and Manuel have acquired a wealth of knowledge and expertise in this area and are very engaging as facilitators. The group itself is very diverse comprising of Children Social Workers, Supervising Social workers and Foster Carers; each with diverse backgrounds and practice experiences. This again is one of the many unique aspects of this course and one that breaks down professional barriers and increases

dialogue and partnership working: which in turn will contribute towards achieving positive outcomes for children.

It is difficult to comment on how this programme will further develop my current practice and influence departmental policy due to the limited sessions delivered thus far. However, since Social Pedagogy appears to offer a more holistic, child-centred, reflective and relationship based approach which embraces positive risk taking; I am certainly looking forwards to attending the forthcoming sessions and utilising the knowledge and skills gained.

Jenine Jackson
Supervising Social Worker

Support group dates

Held at Brent Civic Centre in first floor training suite area

Tuesday 14 April 2015 – (pm)

Tuesday 12 May 2015 – (am)

Tuesday 9 June 2015 – (pm)

Points of contact

Fostering, Duty Support
– new duty number
Tel: [020 8937 3881](tel:02089373881)

Fostering Development
Co-ordinator
Zak Darwood
Tel: [020 8937 4458](tel:02089374458)

LAC Nurses
Tel: [020 8795 6342](tel:02087956342)

LAC Participation Officer
Tel: [020 8937 4173](tel:02089374173)

LAC Education Team
Tel: [020 8937 4907](tel:02089374907)

Youth Offending Team
Tel: [020 8937 3832](tel:02089373832)

Brent Sexual Health Advisor
Tel: [020 8937 3083](tel:02089373083)

Brent Youth and
Connexions Service
Tel: [020 8937 3680](tel:02089373680)

Wembley Centre for
Health and Care
Tel: [020 8795 6000](tel:02087956000)

Staff Updates

We welcome back **Rocio Castro De Pablos** (SSW), who has returned from maternity leave.

We congratulate her on the birth of her son and welcome her back to Placements.

This month Placements have said goodbye to two colleagues, **Thomas Kpaamah** (SSW) and **Vanessa Simpson** (Marketing Officer). Though they will be greatly missed, we wish them all the best as they move on to new adventures.

We need long term foster parents... Can you help?

In Brent we have several children in need of long term placements. We need families who can provide long term stability and commitment. I'm Tanika Buchanan and as the family finder for Brent's looked after children. I'm currently family finding for a sibling group who are urgently in need of long term foster family. If you would like to discuss their profile or have any questions please contact me on **07788389531** or email - Tanika.buchanan@brent.gov.uk.

Mustifa and Mohammed

Mustafa and Mohammed are Somali siblings aged 11 and 8 who share a close, loving and caring relationship.

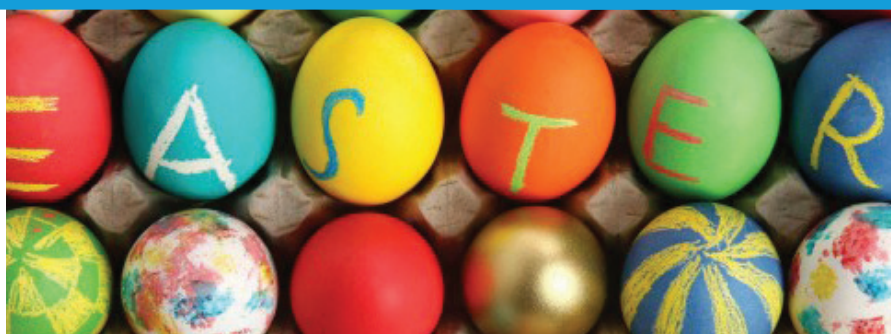
Mustafa and Mohammed have unfortunately experienced neglect and as a result have emotional difficulties and mild behavioural concerns; however Mohammed is currently being supported with therapy via school which is going well. During the boys time in care they have made positive progress. Both children wish to be placed with a family that can support them to develop their emotional maturity and provide them with essential life skills

which will prepare them to develop and flourish as they mature. Mustifa and Mohammed are sociable, joyful children with such cheeky smiles who enjoy attending the local park and being creative. We are looking for carer (s) who can provide the boys with routine can implement boundaries, are patient, and able to provide a safe, nurturing and stable home to allow them to develop emotionally. The carer must be willing to care for the children long term until they mature providing them with a sense of family membership.

Do you know
someone that
is looking after
someone else's
child?



Easter end of term holidays



Bridge Park Community
Leisure Centre,
Harrow Road,
London, NW10 0RG

All day play scheme is from 9am –
5.30pm OR half day 9am – 12pm or
1pm – 5.30pm

Offering a range of activities
including: Arts & Crafts, Drama,
Dance, Athletics, Multi sports,
Football, Racket Sports, Basketball,
Trampolining and much more.

Eight to 13 years old

Cost of full day week: £54

Cost of full day per child is £10.80 –
09:00 to 17:30

Cost of half day per child is £6.10 –
09:00 to 12:00 or 13:00 to 17:30

Five to seven years old

Activities such as Trampolining,
Football, Inflatables and Games.

Drop in sessions per child cost £3.70

Parent and Toddler Drop in sessions

Bouncy Castle Fun and more

Drop in sessions per child cost £3.70

Advance bookings can be made,
but payment will be required at the
time of booking. Alternatively, you
could bring the children on the day.

For more information:

020 8937 3730

Did you know that looking after a child that is not a close relative for over 28 consecutive days is called **private fostering**?

Private fostering is when a child under 16 (18 if they have additional, complex or severe needs) is cared for and provided with accommodation for more than 28 days by an adult who is not an immediate relative. This is a private arrangement made between the parent and carer.

Brent Council have a responsibility to ensure that all children in Brent are being cared for properly and carers are supported. If you know of a child who is being privately fostered please let us know.

www.brent.gov.uk/privatefostering

020 8937 2749

Fostering fortnight

Following on from our first fostering fun-day in May 2014, Brent Placements are planning to make this year's fostering fortnight event even bigger and better.

With a shortage of 10,000 foster carers across the UK, more people are needed to provide children with safe and caring homes. In Brent alone there are approx. 350 children in the care of social services, so we need potential carers local to the borough to come forward.

Fostering Fortnight is an annual campaign to raise the profile of fostering and is the UK's biggest foster carer recruitment campaign. This year it takes place between 1-14 June.

We are looking for foster carers to help us organise this year's event. We want to make this a real community event so your help is essential.

Last year attendees:

- Learnt about the assessment process and what it entails. Found out about different types of fostering (short & long term) as well as the need for sibling group placements and older children.
- Took part in Q&A session with members of the fostering team.
- The kids enjoyed the activity zone with arts & craft activities, a bouncy castle and other activities.
- Met special guest 'Shaun Wallace' from ITV's The Chase and were entertained by the St Michaels Steel Pan Orchestra.
- Received refreshments courtesy of Asda and McVities
- Had a chance to win prizes in our fostering fun-day raffle
- Heard from some Brent carers and their experience of fostering

If you are interested in being part of the organising group, please get in contact.



News

The new training Calendar with courses for 2015 and early 2016 is currently in development. All carers will receive a copy of this via email on its launch.

The training calendar will contain a number of new programmes and also cover courses being delivered via the Local Safeguarding Children's Board.

If you have any feedback on the training programme for the last 6 months then please do email me. We are also looking for suggestions for courses for the new programme.

Email and ID badges

All carers will be issued with a @brent email address over the coming months.

This will be a gradual roll out, in alphabetical order therefore please do not worry if you haven't received log in details yet. The first email addresses will be issued week commencing 20th April.

Additionally we will be issuing ID badges to call carers without one, and issuing new badges to those which have the old Brent shield logo. Please send a picture to zak.darwood@brent.gov.uk or your supervising social worker if you haven't already done so.

Online Services

The Placements Service Development Team will be evaluating our support services over the next few months and looking at how the Foster Carers Handbook and other webpages are used.

The Foster Carers Handbook will also be updated in the coming months to reflect the changes to a number of policies and practice areas including the changes to fees.

We are considering introducing functions such as online chat rooms for carers and other services. Watch out for information in future editions of the newsletter and online.

Foster Carers Agreement

The Foster Carers Agreement is currently being condensed and updated after feedback from the Carers Conference in 2014. The new agreement will be rolled out in May

and all carers will be asked to sign this agreement in place of their current one.

If you would like an opportunity to comment on the content of this before its official "go live" date please email zak.darwood@brent.gov.uk with 'FC Agreement' in the subject line.

Learning and Development Strategy / Sanctions for Non-Attendance at Training

The Placements Service Development Team will be launching a new Carers Learning and Development Strategy and arrangements for sanctions for when carers do not turn up at a course from April 1st. The strategy encompasses the standards and expectations that the department has of Carers and provides details on what carers can expect from the department.

The sanctions document explains the reasons for introducing the policy, and gives reasons for when it will be used and when it won't.

The strategy and the sanctions document are both closely linked with the Foster Carers agreement and other documentation, all of which will be readily available to carers on the Foster Carers Handbook webpage.

If you would like an opportunity to comment on the content of this before its official "go live" date please email zak.darwood@brent.gov.uk with 'Strategy' in the subject line. You will then be sent all relevant documentation covering this area.

WLA Learning

Brent are currently working to develop a number of Learning opportunities across the West London area in partnership with our colleagues in Harrow, Hillingdon, Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, Hounslow and Hammersmith and Fulham. Please look out for these conferences and training events in future editions of the newsletter and online.

Brent Foster Carers Association

The Placements Service Development Team, over the next 6 months, will be providing support to the development of the formal Brent Foster Carers Association. This association will be independent of the council, with Zak Darwood supporting initially to enable it to get started and provide a link for helping run via room bookings and administrative/legislative support.

The Brent Carers Focus group; which currently meets quarterly, will be the Steering Group for the development of Association, and it is expected that a formal launch event will happen in the Summer. If any carers, who currently do not attend the Focus Group would like to become involved in the development of the Association please contact zak.darwood@brent.gov.uk or attend the next Focus group meeting on the 21st April 2015 from 6pm being held at Brent Civic Centre.

This meeting will look at setting up the association, agreeing a constitution and begin the process for elections of a Chair, Association Secretary and Treasurer.

Make 'n' bake corner

Easter bunny cookies



Ready in 35 minutes

Cooking time 15 minutes

Prep time 20 minutes plus chilling

Makes 50 bunnies

Ingredients

200g unsalted butter, cut into small cubes

200g caster sugar

1 medium egg, beaten

400g plain flour, plus extra for dusting

2 tsp vanilla extract

To decorate:

180g icing sugar, sifted

2 tbsp fresh milk

A few drops of pink food colouring

25 mini marshmallows, halved

You will also need:

Bunny-shaped cutters, or use a stencil cut from baking parchment

Method

- 1: Using an electric hand mixer, beat the butter and sugar together in a bowl, until pale and fluffy. Add the egg and continue to beat. Sift in the flour, then add the vanilla extract and fold through to form a dough.
- 2: Turn out the dough onto a lightly floured surface and knead gently until smooth. Chill in the fridge for 30 minutes.
- 3: Preheat the oven to 180°C, fan 160°C, gas mark 4. Line 2 baking trays with baking parchment.
- 4: Remove the dough from the fridge and roll out until it's about 4mm thick. Use a 7cm bunny-shaped biscuit cutter to cut biscuits from the dough.
- 5: Arrange on the baking trays and bake for 12-15 minutes, until golden. Remove from the oven and leave the biscuits on the trays to cool slightly before transferring to wire racks to cool completely. Make your bunnies fluffy! Scatter over pink or white sprinkles while the icing is still wet.
- 6: To make the icing, combine the icing sugar, milk and food colouring in a bowl until smooth. Carefully spread over the biscuits and press a marshmallow tail on each.

Useful contacts

NHS Brent Sexual Health and Substance Misuse Service



At NHS Brent improving sexual health and providing effective substance misuse services are a huge priority.

We want to help you with any questions, worries or problems you may have by offering a range of services that provide personal advice and helpful pointers.

There are many highly trained professionals who are a visit or phone call away. Use our website to find out more about national and regional organisations that offer counselling whenever you need it.

<http://www.sexualhealthbrent.org.uk/>

Brent Local Safeguarding Children Board – launch online training



Brent LSCB is very pleased to announce the launch of their new E Learning zone. Here you will find a range of online courses and learning materials designed to meet your individual needs and priorities.

To get started visit:

<http://brentlscb.learningpool.com/>

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