

Fostering news



Summer 2009

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Hello all

Welcome to the first edition of the Foster Carers Newsletter for 2009.

We appreciate that the newsletter is a valuable medium for providing information to foster carers and as a result we are trying to re-establish and produce regular quarterly editions.

As foster carers, we value your experience and would like you to become actively involved in the production of the newsletters. If you have any interesting issues, positive suggestions or contributions that you would like to share with other foster carers, please contact me on **020 8891 7423**, Fax 020 8891 7682 or e-mail **elaine.white@richmond.gov.uk**

I look forward to hearing from you.

Elaine White



Staff changes

Cleo Pizzey, *Supervising Social Worker* left the department in February 2009.

Wendy Fisher, *Fostering Team Manager* left the department in May 2009.

Lindsay Young, **Chiin Guite** and **Elaine White**, *Supervising Social Workers* joined the Fostering Team in February and March 2009.

Welcome back to **Karen Flanagan de Martinez** who has recently returned from maternity leave. Karen has returned to her previous role as *Recruitment and Assessment Social Worker*.

Andrea Obholzer, *part-time Psychotherapist* recently joined the multi-agency team. Andrea is available Mondays and Wednesdays to consult with young people in foster care and birth children of foster carers.

Foster carers training

We recognise that not having a designated member of the Fostering Team dealing with training has meant that we have not been as organised as we should have been. We have also been disappointed that one of the trainers appointed this year has been unable to provide the required training, resulting in her two remaining courses being cancelled: 'Understanding the fostering task' and 'Working positively with birth parents'. Those of you affected by these cancellations will be contacted directly by the Fostering Team.

The good news is that a post will soon be advertised which will include responsibility for training, so we hope that normal service will be resumed in the near future. This will mean reverting to the arrangements that training is arranged and advertised a year in advance. Hopefully this will mean that you can plan your lives more easily.

Further positive news is that **Mike Ferguson**, *Principal Manager* is currently arranging for a series of workshops to be held around the Children's Workforce Development Council Standards (CWDC). An independent trainer, **Suzy Mackie** has been appointed to run these workshops, which we aim to commence after the summer holiday break.

Suzy has a great deal of experience and has worked with other local authorities as an independent trainer and training consultant for the past two years. Prior to this she worked on training projects with the Fostering Network and the Family Planning Association. She was also a member of the CWDC Expert Reference group that produced the training support and development standards for foster care.

The aim of these workshops is to provide you all with the opportunity to complete your workbooks with support from each other and the staff from the Fostering Team. Training for the Fostering Team staff is due to take place on the 16 July 2009 and 4 August 2009. Proposed dates for foster carers workshops to be announced.

Finally, we are aware that First Aid training is a high priority for many of you and **Terry Palmer** is currently looking at arranging this.

If there is any training that you have enjoyed, found useful and would like to recommend to other carers, please let us know.



Training courses for 2009-2010

2009

Saturday 3 October 2009: Diversity issues for foster carers

Thursday 8 October 2009: Understanding teenagers

Friday 4 December 2009: Recognising and responding to anger and aggression

2010

Monday 1 February 2010: Safer caring and protecting children and minimising false allegations

Saturday 6 March 2010: Promoting self-identity for foster carers

Monday 15 March 2010: Promoting resilience in fostered children

Recruitment and assessments

The Fostering Team has had some enquiries regarding fostering in Richmond upon Thames and these are being followed up with initial visits.

Skills to foster training are schedule for 4, 11, and 18 July 2009

Staff members in the Fostering Team are currently carrying out Form F assessments for new foster carers which hopefully will be ready for approval at the September 2009 Fostering Panel.

Temporary office move

The Fostering and Adoption Team members are currently located in the annexe next to York House until later in 2009 when they will return to York Street. If you need to visit the office, you must continue to report to the reception at 42 York Street.

Foster carers birth children activities

Staff members of the Fostering Team would like to plan an activity for carer's birth children and would be interested to hear from children within your household who would be interested in taking part. Please contact us on 020 8891 7423.

Foster Carers' Forum

You should have by now received a letter from Mike Ferguson following the Foster Carers' Forum held on the 21 April 2009. Mike would like to thank those of you who were able to attend and to let you know that he will be holding these forums on a regular basis. Dates for the remainder of the year are as follows:

Monday 13 July 2009

Wednesday 9 September 2009

Tuesday 1 December 2009

Please note that on all three dates there will be a morning and evening session to give all carers the opportunity to attend. Morning sessions are from 11.00am to 1.00pm and evenings from 7.00 to 9.00pm. They will all be held at the Curriculum and Training Centre.



Richmond Pledge for Foster carers

I wanted to tell you something about the Richmond Pledge, to make sure that carers know about both the Pledge and the work of the Children in Care Council.

First, some history. Late last year we started having meetings of Richmond's Children in Care Council (CiCC). This is a group of young people in care or leaving care who meet regularly with people like Nick Whitfield, the Director of Children's Services and Culture, and Councillor Malcolm Eady, the Council's Lead Member for Children's Services and Culture to talk about the services children and young people receive and to discuss any changes we might be able to make. The idea is that young people get a chance to talk directly to the people who can make the big decisions, and so far it seems to be working really well. Norma Ingham, who many of you will know, is also a member of the CiCC, and is there to represent foster carers' points of view and reflect her experiences of looking after a number of young people during her fostering career.

The first thing the Council thought about was the London Pledge for Children and Young People in Care (or just the 'London Pledge', as the whole thing is a bit of a mouthful). Last year, all the councils in London signed up to the London Pledge. This is a big list of promises which councils are making to children and young people in care and care leavers about things like making sure you get to speak to your social worker, making sure we listen to you, and making sure that you do well at school. You can read the pledge on the Young London Matters website www.younglondonmatters.org/hottopics/pledge

Because we thought this was such a good idea, the Children in Care Council decided to have a Richmond Pledge as well – some extra promises that we

would make for our Richmond Borough children and young people. In March we went away for the weekend and came up with a list of three things that the CiCC wanted the Council to promise to do.

- To support the continuance of the Children in Care Council.
- To sponsor an annual 'Rights and Entitlements' event for children and young people looked-after and leaving care.
- To ensure that looked-after children and young people and those leaving care have access to the internet.

We had a launch at a Council meeting in April, where lots of councillors came along and heard about the work of the CiCC, and we all signed up to the Pledge. What the Pledge means for carers is three things.

Firstly, we are going to help the young people on the Children in Care Council to visit every child and young person in care to talk to them about the work the Council is doing and encourage them to get involved. This is really important to make sure that the CiCC carries on for the future. So please support children and young people to say yes when CiCC members get in touch to ask if they can visit. We need them to join in.

Secondly, we are going to help the Children in Care Council run an event every year where children and young people can come along and talk about the things that matter to them, and work out what they want more of and what needs to change. We're planning that the first of these will happen in the October half term – so please support your children and young people to come along.

Thirdly, we are promising to make sure that children and young people have access to the internet. For those looked

after by foster carers or in residential or semi-independent placements, we expect that the placement will make sure there is a computer there which children and young people can use (though we're clear that there have to be some rules about when they can do this and what they can access, as we have to make sure they're safe as well). We will provide funding for this and for internet access costs for our carers. For young people leaving care and setting up on their own, we're promising to get them USB modems that you plug into your computer (with some credit to start them off), and a computer if they need it too.

If you don't have a computer which your children and young people can use or if you're having difficulties with it, then please let your supervising social worker know so we can sort it out.

For me the most important thing about all of this is that the Children in Care Council is really working and really can make a difference. The young people on the Council have told us some of the things they'd like us to do and we've been able to say 'yes, we'll do that for you', or 'yes, we'll help you to do that'. But, it will only continue to be successful if everyone, including carers, gives it their support. So please, do what you can to encourage the children and young people you're caring for to get involved.

If any carers have any questions about the Children in Care Council, I'll be happy to answer them. Either drop me a line or come along to one of the Foster Carers' Forums and ask them there.

Mike Ferguson
Principal Manager
Children Looked after and Leaving
Care Team

Computer equipment

There is an expectation that all children and young people looked after by the local authority should have access to a computer, including access to the internet.

Foster carers are invited to get in touch with the Fostering Team if they do not have a computer that foster children can use or if computers provided previously are old or not working properly.



Useful contact numbers, links and websites

Initial Response Team (IRT)	020 8891 7963
Family Support Team (FST)	020 8891 7380
Children Looked after Team (CLAT)	020 8831 6153
Leaving Care Team	020 8891 7776
Fostering Team	020 8891 7423
Multi-agency Team	020 8831 6160
Fosterline	0800 040 7675
Fostering Network	020 7620 6400

London Borough of Richmond Children Services procedures manual:
www.proceduresline.com/richmond/childcare

www.raisingkids.co.uk

Provides information and advice for parents – from birth to teenage independence

www.safekids.co.uk

Provides child safety advice and information.

www.nspcc.org.uk/kidszone/surfingsafely.htm

Provides advice on safe internet surfing

Foster Carers' Handbook

Staff from the fostering team will be working together with Richmond Foster Carers' Association (RFCA) to update the Foster Carers' Handbook. Foster carers who would like to be involved with this project should contact **Jon Ingham**.

Foster carer profile

It has been suggested by the Children in Care Council that it would be a good idea for all task-centred and specialist carers to produce a foster carer profile that will provide information to children needing foster placements. The profile will include for example, a brief introduction to all household members, your home, ground rules and other relevant information that a child or young person may need. Your supervising social worker will discuss this and assist you with this.

Respite care

During the summer months, we have a number of carers who are going away on holiday and are unable to take a fostered child with them. Are there any foster carers who would be willing to provide respite placements for these children?

The Fostering Team acknowledge that carers may not want to provide respite care on a regular basis, but we would be grateful if there are any carers who would be willing to help in this busy holiday season. Please discuss this with your supervising social worker further if you are interested.

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