



## Dear Carers,

Goodness me is it that time of year again already! Where has the time gone?!

It's been an incredible year and I continue to take my hat off and send you a massive THANK YOU for all your incredible work in improving the outcomes for the children and young people you dedicatedly care for.

In this period, we say a warm welcome to Gemma, who has stepped into Jim's previous post in Bristol, we know these are huge shoes to fill, but she is absolutely rising to the challenge, building positive relationships and making creative changes already!

We also wished a fond farewell to Jo Stephens, who sadly left the Exeter Team, we wish her all the very best for her future. Gemma has agreed to step in to manage this team alongside Bristol.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Carers Christmas Meal

#### Bristol

Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December – 12pm  
The Kendleshire Golf Club

#### Exeter

Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December – 12.30  
The Devon Hotel

#### South West

Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December – 12pm  
Trethorne Hotel & Golf Club



**Not booked - It's not too late!**

### Upcoming Change:

#### Review Meetings Moving to Microsoft Teams

From January 2026, we'll be switching our review meetings from Zoom to Microsoft Teams. We're sharing this update early to give carers a chance to let us know if this change might cause any issues or if support is needed to get set up.

I also have some sad news to share about our lovely Tash, who will be leaving us in the New Year to move to an exciting new venture, I'm still trying to work out what we will do without her! So, please watch this space for future updates! We will all miss Tash terribly, I want to thank her for all she has done and the fabulous developments she has led on. Like Jim these will be huge shoes to fill, but I am hoping we find someone who can match her energy and commitment, someone who like Gemma is not afraid of such a daunting task and will rise to the challenge!

As we come to the end of the year I reflect on and celebrate all the amazing times and achievements you and the team have managed through 2025. I feel excited to be moving into a new year with even more planned too. Please do make sure you complete feedback forms doing the rounds, so we can continue developing and improving our services in line with your priorities.

I wish you all a fabulous festive season and look forward to seeing you all again soon. Jo (Registered Manager) xx

### Let's find out more about Gemma! Bristol Team Manager

I have been a qualified Social Worker since 2017, beginning my career within Child Protection where I worked for three years, gaining extensive experience in safeguarding and supporting families through complex and challenging situations. I then transitioned into fostering, an area I have always been passionate about, supporting carers and children to achieve stability and positive change.

Over the past three years, I have worked within a large independent fostering agency (IFA), progressing from Supervising Social Worker to Team Manager. This experience strengthened my leadership skills and deepened my understanding of how to support carers to provide safe, nurturing, and therapeutic environments for children.

Recently, I decided to move to a smaller IFA where I can work more closely with foster carers, children, and colleagues. I am passionate about being part of a team that delivers meaningful, positive change for children and young people, and about building strong, collaborative relationships with professionals to ensure the best possible outcomes for those we support.



Out Of Hours  
**0117 967 3744**



Our Website  
**[www.fosteringfoundation.co.uk](http://www.fosteringfoundation.co.uk)**

# Article: How to handle difficult emotions around the Festive Season

For many of us, young and old, the festive season is one of the most exciting times of year, whether we celebrate a religious holiday, host secular festivities, or just enjoy a well-deserved end-of-year rest from work and school. The bright colours of Christmas lights on a cold winter's night alone can lift our spirits.

But, for many children and young people in foster care, the Christmas season can bring its own challenges. Not only are we bombarded with images of the “perfect family Christmas” through every kind of media – from Christmas songs to Hallmark movies – but even conversations in schools and activity clubs might centre around what everyone will be doing with their families over the school holidays.

For our young people in foster care, this can be a stressful or emotional experience – especially if they are already struggling with school-time transitions –  
Here are some ways to help ease the burden of festive feelings...

**Stick to routine:** Nothing is more stressful when you're already feeling the pressure than huge changes in routine. For your young person, sticking to routine wherever possible – whether that be mealtimes, bedtimes or activities – will be enormously beneficial to their wellbeing. If there are major disruptions to routine in the works (like extra guests or visiting family), make sure to talk about these events ahead of time, and work out a plan to make sure they feel comfortable and secure.

**Talk about Christmas:** When planning your festivities, be aware of your child or young person's background – both in terms of culture and their lives before foster care. Talk to your children about what they can expect and what they would enjoy, as well as anything that might be concerning or upsetting them. Make sure they know that you are a safe space to come to if they are feeling worried or have questions.

**Be inclusive:** Be sensitive to your child's cultural needs and traditions – and, if you can, find ways to work them into your own Christmas plans. Not only will this ensure that your young person feels less isolated, but will also provide a fantastic opportunity to create stronger bonds with the children in your care.

**Respect their decisions:** For some young people who have lived through adverse childhood experiences, there's no getting away from the pain that the holidays bring. If your child would rather not celebrate Christmas, or would prefer to only join in for parts of the holiday fun, it's important to respect their decisions and provide them with autonomy – as long as it is safe to do so. If this is the case, try to find other ways to include them in family time to avoid feelings of isolation – winter walks, playing board games or cooking together could be great ways to build a sense of togetherness without being overtly festive.

**Prepare for heightened emotions:** Don't be surprised or worried if behaviours and emotions seem to regress during this stressful time of year. Instead, approach issues that arise using your PACE training, helping your child or young person to explore their emotions – such as sadness, anger and loneliness – and reinforce good behaviours and tools that you've learnt together. If you're worried or in doubt, reach out to your support team at The Fostering Foundation – we're here to help.

**Be aware of potential triggers:** If your young person has been through adverse childhood experiences – particularly those involving alcohol or drug abuse in the home – the party season can be very triggering. Talk to your social workers and support team – or your young person, if they are comfortable enough to do so – to try to identify any potential triggers ahead of time. That way, even in the most social of seasons, you can be tucked up at home with a hot chocolate long before anyone cracks open the Baileys.

**Make new traditions:** Most importantly of all, work with the children in your care to create new traditions for your families, taking the best memories and adding fun new ideas, too. This will allow your whole family – not just the young people in your care – to make new happy memories while honouring the tough times too.

# CHRISTMAS SELFIE CHALLENGE



## Join the Festive Selfie Challenge!

This holiday season, we're inviting carers and young people to create lasting memories by taking part in our Festive Selfie Challenge! Whether it's a silly hat, a sparkly jumper, or a cozy moment by the tree—snap a selfie and share the joy.

Why not share your festive photos with us? Together, we can build a gallery of positive memories that celebrate connection, creativity, and the magic of the season.