



the
Fostering
Foundation

Laying Foundations for the Future

JULY 2024 NEWSLETTER

regional news

Exeter News

We can welcome some new carers to the region – who happen to have a lot of fostering experience! Welcome to you!! It has been really nice to have our newer carers at the support groups and everyone getting to know one another (whilst enjoying cake!) It has been great to have Rich (therapeutic lead) at the support group at the Kenn Centre. You are all such a great group of carer families. Having Rich come and support you as you share what is happening is so valuable. Please do come to the Kenn Centre groups so we can keep growing the group. It is great to catch up with one another once a month.

It has been a really busy period with so many households going through some challenges!! For example, young people having play therapy and it bringing up so much about their relationship with their parents and questioning their identity. You, as carers, support the children to carry all this emotionally when they are finding it really hard and help them to find some acceptance to their situation, knowing that you will always love and keep them safe.

We have young people settling with their new carers who are doing fantastically! We are so proud of you guys! How attuned you are to the children in your care is so impressive! Adjusting to living in a new family is such a massive thing but how you are finding creative ways to help form relationships is just brilliant!

We have children who have completed their exams recently which is a big achievement. There are plans for the summer to start helping them to prepare for college. Lots of you have plans for the summer including taking children to have new experiences, holidays and trips. These are not always the most relaxing times for carers which we acknowledge but the commitment to broadening your children's world views is great!!

Tavistock News

Once again, all the staff and team would like to say a huge THANK YOU for the brilliant work you have done so far this year. We're half way through the year and we can see the amazing work you have been doing. So, thank you to you all!

Please see below some of the recognition we noted lately:

Well done to JR for having complex needs children and doing a great job.

Well done to D and MA for being proactive with arranging activities, and school places for their children, and plans on taking them on holiday.

Good job to E and NMB for doing a brilliant job with their new placement.

Well done to R and KJ for their hard work and how the children are developing well in their care.

Good job to AC for being supportive with their young person and also helping them transition to new foster carers.

Well done to KB for the praises received from the Local Authority.

Good job to R and HS for helping out our young people whilst their foster carers have been away.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome our new foster carers, F and CBG, and D and RG.

**THANK
YOU!**

regional news

Bristol News

We have fabulous carers across the region who continue to provide amazing care under a variety of challenging circumstances. We are always learning and seeking to better understand our children. The relationships you have with your children are the biggest security in their lives.

We have two yoga – wellbeing – mindfulness sessions coming up for carers which we are excited about. This goes some way in recognizing how busy your lives are and trying to reset before the summer holidays! Please come along for a few moments of calm before the schools break up!

We have had a number of young people who have done GCSE and SATS recently so a massive well done!

We have welcomed Simone to the team as a new but experienced supervising social worker. Simone is a great addition to the team. She has been getting to meet you at the support group. We all welcome Simone!

We have been holding face to face support groups with the most recent one being in The Park Centre and attended by Rich, therapeutic lead. It is really exciting to welcome, Rich, who can provide so much insight into the lives of our children and support to you all. We are lining up a Sanctuary Seeking Young Person specialist to come to a workshop in September which will be informative.

We have had a stall at the Bristol Pride Event on the Downs which was amazing. It was very colourful and vibrant! The bubbles on our stall seemed a big hit with children playing in them (and adults stopping for a selfie!)

It is that time of year when you will all be getting ready for the summer holidays and we know that many of you have plans to keep you children busy and active! Have a wonderful summer – not that it will be a quiet summer for you all – but we know that the children will benefit greatly from all the experiences you provide them in the coming month!





Understanding child development milestones – and what to look out for

All children develop at their own pace to reach milestones in how they play, learn, speak, act and move, but the disruptions and instability typical of life in the care system can have a negative impact on these. As one of The Fostering Foundation's team of foster carers, you may be among the first to notice any delays in the cognitive, language, social and emotional development of the children in your care.

Happily, early intervention and positive support can help address these delays and help get them back on track. Some developmental milestones include:

- Speech and language
- Dressing skills
- Fine motor and visual motor skills
- Self-care and hygiene skills

As the foster carer, you'll probably be the child's primary source for connection, so it's vital they feel safe in your care. If the emotional needs of a child go unmet, they may go on to experience harsh perception of self, emotional numbness or feelings of emptiness, difficulty in trusting others, chronic feelings of guilt and shame, and difficulty in expressing emotions. All of this will almost certainly delay or halt their emotional and cognitive development.

Depending on the history of the child in your care, their body may have a faster automatic fear response than you are used to. The most important thing you can offer the child in your care is a warm, affirming, secure and consistent relationship with you.

You can also help by bolstering these three key areas to ensure that your child enjoys a secure, safe, and positive home environment:

Trust

Often, children in care have been let down by the people who were meant to care for them and keep them safe. So, they may find it difficult to trust adults. Building trust takes time and consistency – that means showing up for your young person and doing what you say you will. It also requires heaps of empathy, patience and persistence – even at times when you feel like you're taking one step forward and three steps back.

Empathy

Holding space for your child's feelings and seeing things from their point of view in any situation – even when everyone else feels they are the one in the wrong – cultivates a positive, secure environment where they will trust you to be there for them.

Validation

Validating your child's emotions and feelings is crucial in ensuring that they feel seen, heard and understood in your foster home, ultimately creating a sense of safety for them to work through feelings as they arise before they get big enough to be perceived as a threat.

Fight, flight, freeze or collapse are the human body's automatic response options to threats and stressors. We all experience these reactions in times of adversity, but it may be more pronounced in a child with a traumatic or unstable background – and in a foster home where the above values have yet to be established.

This stress response is something you need to understand when caring for children with a history of abuse or neglect. Grounding techniques can help your child get back to the present and bring their body back into the normal state so that you can work

together through whatever has triggered the response.

Remember, when a child is outside their window of tolerance, they're in survival mode and unable to access the higher parts of their brain responsible for thinking, feeling, learning and memory. Try these grounding techniques to help bring a child back into a calm state, before you can help them move forward by talking about what happened.

Breathing exercises: Box breathing is a quick, simple way to get your child feeling calmer – get them to imagine drawing a box with their breath as they breathe in for a count of four, hold it for a count of four, breathe out for a count of four, and hold it for a count of four. A simple way to help guide this technique is to look at a window, picture frame, or any other square/rectangular object and trace it with your eyes as you breathe through the 'box'. There are lots of YouTube videos on breathing exercises for kids. Or apps like Calm and Mind are full of quick and easy meditation practices.

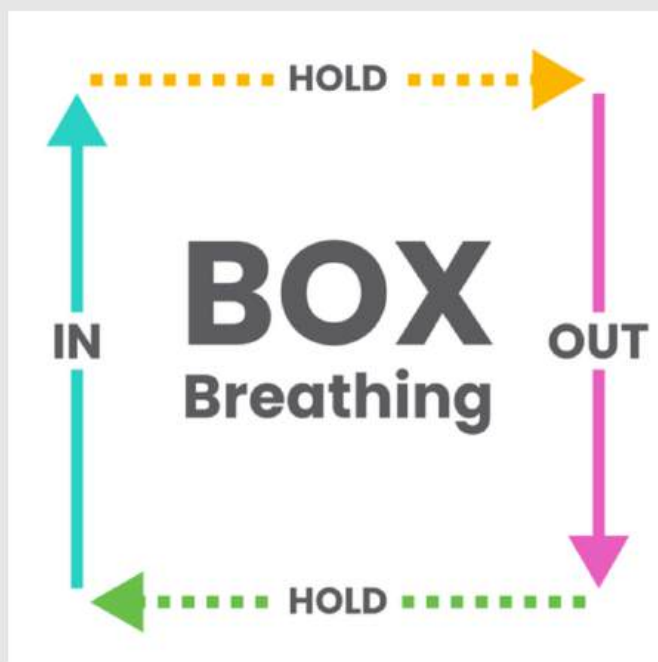
Sensory exercises: Looking around them, touching, hearing, seeing, and feeling their surroundings can help to bring a child who is in a fearful state back into the present. This is also a good technique to use to help children who get flashbacks.

Rhythmic movement: Anyone who has comforted a crying baby will know just how soothing this can be. Running, dancing and drumming can help reset the nervous system and bring the child back into a state of calm.

Music: Children can use headphones to listen to music to help them feel calmer and more in control, or you may want to suggest singing a song together, with the aim to help them breathe deeper.

Exercise: The fear response can come with physical symptoms, including rushes of adrenaline and muscle tension. Exercising, such as getting out in the fresh air for a short walk, can be an ideal grounding exercise.

For foster children, we can't erase old trauma or remove all possibility of future trauma, but we can build emotional skills and buffers to help children with the way they view themselves and cope with the world.



Magic moments

A big thank you for all 19 'Fostering Moments' submissions that were shared to mark Fostering Fortnight. Here are just a few for you to enjoy - tissues at the ready!

**Foster Care
Fortnight**
The Fostering Network



My favourite fostering moment is...

This Saturday at the beach, noticing his confidence, being able to splash and even swim in the big waves and yet also having the knowledge and sense not to go too deep. Last year he was quite scared, despite wanting to go in, and this year he can access all of that after just a few months of swimming lessons. Plus looking at rock pools, building sand castles and being regulated enough to leave when it's time, knowing that we will come back another day.

#FosteringMoments

**Foster Care
Fortnight**
The Fostering Network



My favourite fostering moment is...

X has recently taken up Freestyle Dance and has really enjoyed learning some new dances and routines. She practises at home and loves to show us her progress. Yesterday she had her 1st Freestyle Dance exam to showcase her routine and absolutely smashed it. She looked amazing in her gold sparkly outfit and had a smile on her face where she was bursting with pride and excitement. Its amazing to see her grow and focus on this where 6 months ago she wouldn't have been able to.

#FosteringMoments

**Foster Care
Fortnight**
The Fostering Network



My favourite fostering moment is...

A special moment for our young man is that he is going to be doing sats in a week's time, he is so keen and eager to learn now and is starting to believe he can achieve anything he puts his mind to. He is also super proud to have been picked to fill out an application form for prefect at his school, and his face when he came home, well he was super happy and brings home the reason why this is an amazing thing to have been given the chance to do. He has joined scouts which he absolutely loves and is giving him opportunities to explore and try lots of new things and mix with different children, the same age and older.

#FosteringMoments

**Foster Care
Fortnight**
The Fostering Network



My favourite fostering moment is...

X came to us at 5 years old, she immediately called G dad as a father figure was absent in her life. After 2yrs with us and always saying JoJo and dad, we were sitting in the car and she was chatting away and out of the blue she said "mummy ", my heart stopped and I caught my breath and just knew she was now mine forever.

#FosteringMoments

**Foster Care
Fortnight**
The Fostering Network



My favourite fostering moment is...

I am proud to say, one of our young people is on track for university. X has worked so hard with his studies, which have not been easy for him, having to apply himself more than most. He is a really determined young man and deserves to do well in following his dream to become a primary school teacher.

#FosteringMoments

**Foster Care
Fortnight**
The Fostering Network



My favourite fostering moment is...

I have always said that my most poignant fostering moment was when I sat with my foster daughter (who arrived here at 6 years old and almost non-verbal) watching 'The Greatest Showman' and her belting out 'This is Me' word perfect and at the top of her lungs!

#FosteringMoments

Top Tips for Adopting SAFE & HEALTHY ONLINE HABITS

Everyone has so much going on in their lives, and that includes children: from exams and deadlines to anxiety and mental health struggles. It's quite easy to send memes, make jokes and vent online about the things that irritate us, but when was the last time you – or your child – took a moment to share something kind or positive instead? In fact, when did you last stop and think about your family's online activities? To help keep them safe and teach them healthy online habits, we need to develop our children's digital resilience. There are lots of ways that children can become more digitally resilient, and we've pulled together some popular strategies here...

WHAT IS DIGITAL RESILIENCE?



Resilience doesn't mean being so tough that nothing gets to you, and it's not about "putting up with things" either. Instead, it's the ability to recover from setbacks. Everyone feels sad, worried, scared or upset at times: it's how we respond and adapt to those situations which is important. Digital resilience is about making choices that keep us safe and happy online, even when we're exposed to something negative or upsetting. Building your child's digital resilience will help reduce the impact of potential risks as they engage with and navigate around the online world.

MAKE POSITIVE LIFESTYLE CHOICES



- ✓ Make time for the people and things that make you happy.
- ✓ Monitor your screen time and stick to your limits.
- ✓ On social media, follow people that make you feel good about yourself – and unfollow the ones who don't.
- ✓ Spread some positivity: post good reviews, leave encouraging comments and share good news.

KEEP YOUR HEALTH IN MIND

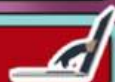


- ✓ Try to factor in regular breaks offline and away from your screen – ideally, outdoors for some revitalising fresh air.
- ✓ Exercise is a brilliant stress-buster: even a walk around the block, a bike ride or a stroll to your local shop can really work wonders.
- ✓ Be strict with yourself about putting devices away in plenty of time before bed: they can interfere with a good night's sleep, which is essential for staying healthy.

REACH OUT FOR SUPPORT

- ✓ If you have a problem online, don't be afraid reach out to specialist people or organisations that could help.
- ✓ Follow people on socials who have the same values and morals as you.
- ✓ You could always talk to a friend, or a trusted adult like a teacher or family member for some advice.

PUT SAFETY FIRST



- ✓ If you see something online that upsets or worries you, tell a trusted adult about it as soon as possible.
- ✓ You could also report the content that's making you feel uncomfortable to the site or app that you saw it on, so they can look into it.
- ✓ Another option is to block the person or the account that's causing you a problem – or you could go one step further by totally deleting the app you were using.

GET THINGS CLEAR IN YOUR HEAD



- ✓ Ask yourself what kindness online actually looks like. Can you remember the last time someone was kind or supportive towards you online? What did they do?
- ✓ Think about how it makes you feel when someone sends you a positive or funny message online.
- ✓ What about the opposite: has someone ever been deliberately unkind to you online? What did they do and how did it make you feel?
- ✓ If someone's behaviour online is causing you stress, try to remind yourself of all the steps you can take if a person's being unkind online.

Meet Our Expert

Cayley Jorgensen is a registered counsellor with the Health Professions Council of South Africa, working in private practice to offer counselling to children, teenagers and young adults. She is the founder of Ingage Support, a mobile app focusing on mental health awareness with the goal of providing resources and solutions to schools worldwide.



**National
Online
Safety**

#WakeUpWednesday



OPPORTUNITY AHEAD

Young Person Panel Member

I AM LOOKING FOR

Young People who can represent their local community. That means young people age 8 - 18 (or over) and from every ethnic and social background.

We want young people who are good at listening and talking. Full initial and ongoing training and support will be provided.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING A YOUNG PEOPLE'S PANEL?

We aim to have up to 3 young people over the age of 8 years, make up each panel. There will be a Fostering Foundation staff member present throughout, to offer support as needed. There will also be the adults present that are being assessed.

You will participate in an activity (game, etc.) with applicants, and then take part in interviewing the adult applicant(s). You will then have an open discussion with the TFF staff member about how the panel meeting went and your thoughts about the applicant(s) being assessed. Your views will form part of the applicant's assessment and suitability to become foster carers or indeed whether they become a member of our staff team at TFF.

The experience of being involved when interviewing potential foster carers or staff applicants will aim to provide you with some invaluable skills. With the professionals valuing and respecting your views, the experience can also have a very positive impact on your confidence and self-esteem and make a great addition to your CV! You can rely on us to provide you with a reference and confirm your experience as a Young Person's Panel member, should you ever need a reference.

Receive a token of our appreciation for attendance, including a certificate.

Interested

If you would like to become the next Young Person's Panel member and are willing to complete online training, then please ask your carer to email: NDaniel@fosteringfoundation.co.uk





HAVE YOU BEEN CALLED LAZY?

YOU'RE NOT...
AND THERE
IS SCIENCE
BEHIND IT!



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