Welcome to the spring edition of the fostering newsletter.

As usual, we’ve been busy working on campaigns to support our foster carers, as well as promoting fostering to potential new carers. A highlight has been hitting 230 new fostering enquiries since April 2016, as well as seeing wonderful dedication and support from current foster carers at our recruitment coffee morning in February.

Looking forward to Easter and spring, there are a number of events coming up for you to get involved with – including a big fostering celebration event at the Floral Pavilion in New Brighton, so look out for your invite!

The Fostering team :)

You Can Foster

‘You Can Foster’ has now encouraged almost 1,000 new people in the North West to enquire about becoming a foster carer.

During Foster Care Fortnight (8-21 May), the campaign will be expanding and will feature some new faces. As you probably know, there is still a real need for more foster carers, especially for teenagers, sibling groups and children with additional needs.

It’s these young people that the next phase of the campaign will focus on. A TV ad campaign will start in June, so look out for that!

One of the most successful things the campaign has done so far is share great stories about existing foster carers. The team would welcome more people sharing their story, for both the campaign website and its social media channels.

They would particularly like to hear from people who:
• have helped a child in their care achieve their ambition or make steps towards doing so
• foster teenagers or children with additional needs
• are single carers or in a same sex relationship

From April, You Can Foster is growing, with eight Yorkshire authorities joining the campaign. If you’ve got friends and family in north, west and south Yorkshire please get them to look out for the campaign and pass the message on.

www.youcanfoster.org

Safer Internet Day (SID)

Safer Internet Day (SID) took place on 7th February and is part of a national campaign to create a safer online environment for everyone.

If you’re looking for advice or support on online safety, the SID website has lots of useful resources to help parents and carers learn more. As well as a helpful ‘parents’ technology guide’ which includes advice around smartphones, tablets and other devices; you’ll also find useful tips to help you start a conversation with young people around staying safe.

For more information, please visit the Safer Internet website www.saferinternet.org.uk/safer-internet-day/2017

Teenwirral.com also has advice on online bullying and keeping young people safe online: www.teenwirral.com/bullying-and-online-safety-1

WIRRAL

ISSUE 6: April 2017
Great days out: by foster sister Emily Hardy

Hi, I'm Emily. Over the next few issues I am going to be talking about some great places near you to go and visit. They are perfect for family days out. I hope you enjoy and get to visit these places yourself.

So the first place is Chester Zoo. As you can guess, it is in Chester and it is a zoo!

I have been many times and highly recommend visiting in the winter or summer. If you buy a membership you can go when you want, and there is a special membership you can buy for foster children. All you do is ask for a foster child membership and put it in your name, so when the children you have leave and the next children come into placement you can still use the membership.

The zoo is very big and is full of many interesting animals (1,500 to be precise). You'll never get bored and can go many times. It's perfect in winter because you can wrap up warm and take a hot chocolate, or take a picnic in summer. There's also a monorail – a train that goes right over the zoo so you can see the animals from an eagle's view, plus the restaurants are great too.

There are lots of different membership deals, and if you visit about four times a year that covers the cost. Some perks of being a member are:

- 10% discounts in cafes and shops in the zoo
- members' days were you can bring up to 12 guests for half price
- the quarterly members' magazine,

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**Kids for Caring group**

Report by Jasmine Simcock, daughter of foster carer:

**KIDS FOR CARING** is a group to support the sons and daughters of foster carers. Social workers are there to support us and give us advice on how to deal with children’s behaviour, how to support the child, and lots more.

We also do different courses such as attachment and the development of children and their behaviour, and we’ve learnt about Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and how it affects children.

We meet up every third Thursday of the month at Callister Youth Club, 19 Argyle Street Birkenhead CH41 1AD, 6:30pm - 8:00pm. The next Kids for Caring meeting is on the 16th of March, for all children over 11 years who are the sons and daughters of foster carers.

We go on trips with the group, like to Alton towers, Blackpool Pleasure Beach, bowling and lazer quest. We’ve been to the cinema, mini golf and recently went go karting which was a lot of fun! For the next trip in April we are going to Rampworx Skate Park in Liverpool.

I really enjoy coming to Kids for Caring as we do interesting courses to help with certain situations at home, plus it’s good to have other people to talk to who are in the same situation as you and understand how you feel.

I have also had an insight into how children from different backgrounds behave, and how to deal with this and offer support.

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**Increase in foster care allowances 2017-18**

**GOOD NEWS** – the foster carer allowance will increase from 1st April 2017, in line with Government recommended allowances.

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</table>

There is no proposed change to the skills band or other fees. The two week holiday allowance for all children in full time care with a foster carer will be paid automatically in June.

If you have any queries, please speak to your supervising social worker who will be pleased to assist you.

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**Peer mentors**

**WHAT are peer mentors?**

Peer mentors are experienced foster carers, and they are only a call away. Mentors are there for when times get stressful, tough and tiring, or if you feel as though you have nowhere to turn.

Mentors are here to help, guide and advise you in any situation you may find yourself in. If you feel like pulling your hair out – stop, think, and just give them a call. It can just be a chat, a cup of tea, or even a quick text. Mentors will do their best to help and advise you in whatever way they can, so anything to do with fostering, paperwork, training, or even just an ear to bend when you need to let off some steam in confidence.

If you would like to be linked to a peer mentor, please speak to your supervising social worker.

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**SEND YOUR IDEAS FOR ARTICLES TO JANETLATHAM@WIRRAL.GOV.UK**
### SD Questionnaires

**MOST FOSTER carers will have completed strengths and difficulties questionnaires (SDQs) for the children they are looking after.**

Information from the questionnaires is fed back to central Government and gives a picture of the emotional health of children who are looked after. A national picture is built up from carer feedback across all local authorities.

The questionnaire is to be completed without a great deal of analysis – carers are not to dwell on it when completing it. It is a snapshot which can be completed in an average of 10 minutes. The social worker will send the document out several weeks before the child’s health assessment and ask for it to be returned within two weeks. Young people between the age of 11 years up to 18 years will be encouraged to complete their own questionnaire too, and this information is also returned to the social worker.

The social worker will then generate a score, which will determine one of three avenues to be pursued.

There could be: 1: no action necessary; 2: telephone consultation between the social worker and CAMHS with a possible ‘choice’ CAMHS appointment to follow; 3: ‘choice’ CAMHS appointment with possible attendance at Accident and Emergency if necessary.

Social workers and foster carers will need to make sure that information is conveyed confidentially.

From 1st April, social care will take the lead in this process, rather than health as before. Foster carers will be central to this and should have greater involvement in both planning and outcomes for children in terms of their emotional health. All of this information will feed into the young person’s health care plan.

Please discuss with your supervising social worker or the child's social worker if you have any queries. Peer mentors have also had awareness raising training and may be able to help.