Fostering Excellence Awards 2017
I am delighted to welcome you to this year’s Fostering Excellence Awards.

As the UK’s leading fostering charity, The Fostering Network is passionate about the difference foster care makes – not only to fostered children and young people, but also to their foster carers and the wider fostering family. One of the things that makes us a unique organisation is our ability to bring together everyone who is involved in the lives of fostered children. Now in their fourth year, our awards are one way of doing this as we acknowledge the transformational power of foster care and celebrate achievement, commitment and love.

Today you will hear inspirational stories of some incredible young people. This is also an opportunity to remember the tens of thousands of successes being accomplished every day by the children and young people living with foster families right across the UK.

As well as celebrating young people, these awards are also a chance to congratulate and say thank you to everyone who has worked so tirelessly to improve opportunities for fostered children and young people which help them fulfil their potential. The award winners are representative of all those foster carers, social workers, local authorities, fostering services, civil servants, politicians, employers, businesses, teachers and fundraisers who invest so much into the lives of the children and young people in foster care.

Thank you to our sponsors whose support has made today possible. Thank you too for joining us today – your presence makes this event special, and I hope you leave the ceremony feeling inspired and sharing our belief that foster care does indeed transform lives.

Kevin Williams
Chief Executive
About us

The Fostering Network is the UK’s leading fostering charity.

We are the essential network for fostering, bringing together everyone who is involved in the lives of fostered children. We support foster carers to transform children’s lives and we work with fostering services and the wider sector to develop and share best practice.

We work to ensure all fostered children and young people experience stable family life and we are passionate about the difference foster care makes. We champion fostering and seek to create vital change so that foster care is the very best it can be.

Find out more at thefosteringnetwork.org.uk

Our hosts

Kathleen Toner

Kathleen is The Fostering Network’s Director in Northern Ireland and has been with the organisation since January 2013.

She has 25 years’ experience in a range of roles in Northern Ireland’s voluntary and community sector, mainly within family and childcare. Prior to joining The Fostering Network, Kathleen led on domestic abuse and looked after children policy for the NSPCC in Northern Ireland.

Kathleen represents The Fostering Network in Northern Ireland on a range of cross-sector groups reflecting the views and experiences of fostering families.

Stephen Watson

Stephen is founder of ctn group, who have chosen The Fostering Network as their charity of the year. He has a background in media and politics and has spent his career advising on communications and reputation.

He is a former BBC News and Current Affairs producer and established The Leadership Agency. He works predominantly with individual leaders and their leadership teams, advising on communications strategy and coaching personal impact skills.

Stephen is a frequent public speaker and retains an interest in political campaigning and international relations. He is chairman of the British-German Association and serves as an Honorary Officer and advisor to the Royal Navy. He is also chairman of the African conservation charity, Tusk, whose patron is Prince William, Duke of Cambridge.
2.00pm **Ceremony commences**

- Welcome
- Outstanding Achievement Award
- Outstanding Achievement in Education Award
- Outstanding Contribution by a Social Worker Award

**Interval**

- Cream tea is served

**Ceremony recommences**

- Outstanding Contribution by Sons and Daughters Award
- Outstanding Contribution by a Foster Carer Award
- Jon and Kathy Broad Award
- Fostering Community Supporter Award
- Fostering Friendly: Employer of the Year Award
- President’s Award

4.00pm **Close**
Outstanding Achievement Award

Nathan Fleetwood

Nathan has lived with his foster carers for seven years. At just 16, and following being diagnosed as having additional needs, he has become a world-class athlete running within the T20 classification.

Nathan is a sociable young man and is the life and soul of the party. In the words of his foster carers, he has a smile that can ‘light up a room.’ He can also ‘run like a whippet’ and his sprinting prowess means that he has represented Scotland and Great Britain at home and abroad, winning medals and breaking records. Nathan holds the T20 Scottish long jump record and is one of the top 100m and 200m runners in the UK, recently winning four medals at the Special Olympics in Sheffield.

Nathan’s foster carer, Fiona Donaldson, who nominated him said: ‘The challenges that Nathan has faced would have been immense for any child, yet he continues to exceed expectations, and he doesn’t even know it. It has been a bit of a rollercoaster, but Nathan has achieved so much and we love him.’

Emma Lakin

Emma first moved into foster care when she was three, having had a very traumatic early childhood and lacking self-esteem. However, with the support of her foster carers, she has developed into an inspirational woman with a flourishing career and family.

Emma worked successfully through her GCSEs and A-levels despite the stress of not knowing if children’s services would enable her to remain living with her foster carers until after her exams as this was before staying put. Since then she has gained a degree, and she has just completed her Masters.

While living with her foster carers, Emma played a significant role in helping other fostered children settle in to her home, and when she moved to independent living she became one of her foster carers’ support carers. When her foster mother’s parents died, Emma moved back in to the house to look after the children who were in placement there.

Since then, Emma has got married and, along with her husband Chris, has established an estate agent business with a number of employees.

Emma is a keen promoter of fostering, giving talks to foster carers on behalf of her local authority and appearing in her local papers, most recently during Foster Care Fortnight 2017.

Emma’s foster carer, Lynne Moore, who nominated her said: ‘We are extremely proud of Emma. Despite her difficult start to life she has achieved her goals and is committed to aiding others in their journey through life. We think she’s amazing.’

Skye Marshall

When Skye first moved in with her foster carer eight years ago she lacked confidence and was constantly worried. Since then she has worked hard, focused on her chosen path and reaped the rewards for all her effort.

Described as being humorous and interesting, Skye is an excellent role model to the other young people living with her foster carer, never taking a day off school and developing countless new skills such as playing the violin, learning sign language and helping to interview for new teachers.

Skye has done extremely well in her GCSEs, has completed her Duke of Edinburgh bronze award and is now working towards her A-levels. She has volunteered hundreds of hours with St John Ambulance, representing them at a reception in Buckingham Palace where she met Princess Anne.

Skye is a keen fundraiser, running the junior Great North Run to raise money for leukaemia, as well as bag packing, cake baking and leg waxing. She is also a passionate advocate for fostering and assists in the training of panel members. On top of all this, Skye has travelled widely – most recently to India – has a part-time job and is learning to drive.

Skye’s foster carer, Patsy Marshall, who nominated her said: ‘Skye has developed into a beautiful, independent young woman with an amazing future ahead. She never gives up and her determination to succeed means she has achieved so much over the last eight years.’
Sammeyjoe Daley-Davies

When Sammeyjoe first came to live with her foster carers aged eight, she had very low self-esteem and a poor reputation with her teachers because of her challenging classroom behaviour. However, she did arrive with the ambition of being either a maths teacher or a ninja!

15 years later, the dream of being a ninja has had to be put on hold, but maths has been a very important part of Sammeyjoe’s life. She has excelled at school, with 10 GCSEs and four A-levels, and has gone on to gain a first in her accountancy and finance degree. While at university Sammeyjoe was awarded the Dean’s prize for best undergraduate in the faculty of management. She is now working towards qualifying as an accountant with a top accounting firm.

Sammeyjoe has, in the words of her foster carers ‘flourished into a beautiful young lady’. She is a talented athlete, representing her city on numerous occasions, and a mentor to care leavers attending university for the first time.

Sammeyjoe’s foster carers, Lorraine and Tom Warren, who nominated her said: ‘It is in education that Sammeyjoe has shone the most. We are extremely proud of Sammeyjoe and her positivity – what she has achieved simply staggers the imagination.’

Daniel Pauley

Daniel is about to enter the fourth and final year of his podiatry degree at Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh. Having had two periods of being fostered, Daniel left school aged 15 with almost no qualifications. After some time working, Daniel showed great self-determination in making the decision to attend college and gain a pre-entry university qualification.

Daniel has thrived at university, living and breathing podiatry. This year he received a special award for achieving the highest mark in his clinical exams, something he is proud of because it will allow him to serve others better through his podiatry.

Daniel’s lecturer, Evelyn Weir, who nominated him said: ‘Daniel is outstandingly hard working, hugely committed to his studies and an incredible and inspirational young man. As a foster carer myself, I am all too aware of the challenges care leavers face and the issues and experiences that they may have survived. Daniel’s hard work ethic, his incredible resilience, his willingness to be open about his care background and his appetite for learning have all combined to make him what he is today.’

Sarah-Louise Pullen

Before Sarah-Louise first went to live with her foster carer five years ago, at the age of 13, she had been the sole carer for her mum. Despite the impact that this inevitably had on her schooling, Sarah-Louise was determined to succeed academically. This she has done, passing 10 GCSEs and gaining acceptance to Wycombe High School for girls where her confidence and willingness and ability to communicate more effectively grew significantly. Sarah-Louise also achieved AAC in her A-levels and has started a business management degree at Birmingham University this autumn.

As well as her academic achievements, Sarah-Louise has completed her Duke of Edinburgh bronze and silver awards and is in the final stages of the gold award. She has also flourished in part-time jobs in stables and as a hotel night porter.

Sarah-Louise’s foster carer, Mandy Phillips, who nominated her said: ‘The fact that Sarah-Louise is going to university is a great achievement indeed and is much deserved. She has a tenacity and determination to succeed, and that success has come despite many setbacks which would have floored many of her peers. I think she is amazing.’

Supported by The Exilarch’s Foundation

The Exilarch’s Foundation was founded by Sir Naim Dangoor almost 40 years ago to promote education and Jewish causes. We have proudly been involved in, to name a few, running a series of scholarships to encourage young people from deprived backgrounds to continue to higher education, sponsoring the Westminster Academy and more recently providing significant support in the medical education and research field through donations to The Francis Crick Institute for biomedical research and The Royal Society of Medicine. We are pleased to be supporting the work of The Fostering Network and the Fostering Excellence Awards.

As well as flourishing academically, Daniel is a tremendous ambassador for the university, working with the admissions department to meet with potential students with care experience to talk to them about university life.

Daniel’s lecturer, Evelyn Weir, who nominated him said: ‘Daniel is outstandingly hard working, hugely committed to his studies and an incredible and inspirational young man. As a foster carer myself, I am all too aware of the challenges care leavers face and the issues and experiences that they may have survived. Daniel’s hard work ethic, his incredible resilience, his willingness to be open about his care background and his appetite for learning have all combined to make him what he is today.’
Outstanding Contribution by a Social Worker Award

Sandy Berwald

Sandy has worked for East Sussex social services for over 40 years and started the Special Placement Scheme at the county council more than 25 years ago.

Her dedication to providing the best care for the most vulnerable looked after children in the area is clear to her colleagues, a small team that includes social workers, psychologists and highly-trained foster carers. They appreciate her child-centred attitude and her determination to provide for the children in the scheme, fighting for funding, education and therapy packages that best meet their needs and the needs of her carers.

Sandy has developed the scheme to be eclectic in its approach and to encourage those involved to work together, as it is her belief that it takes a village to raise a child. This has enabled carers to be therapeutic and try different approaches. She is praised for her 24-hour devotion to the job and even contacts her foster carers on Christmas morning to thank them for what they do.

Foster carer, Tina Henderson, who nominated Sandy for this award, said: ‘She has built a world of excellent practice around the ever-changing needs of looked after children. Sandy shows total commitment to her foster families and she never gives up. Many children owe her so much but she never looks for recognition. She may be small in stature but she’s huge in heart.’

Liz Guest

Liz has been a social worker for 44 years, spending 28 of those with Fostering North East, and is praised for going above and beyond her role time and time again.

Liz values her carers and also their birth children as an important part of the fostering family. She ensures training is relevant and up to date as well as making sure that placements are well matched.

Liz knows when her carers need someone to talk to and time out for themselves, and she supports her foster carers through thick and thin, practically and emotionally. However she also knows when to encourage them to step outside their comfort zone. Her support is constant and professional while also being non-intrusive and genuine.

Dawn McLennan, who nominated her for the award, said: ‘Liz has been my supervising social worker for 17 years, from completing the assessment process to working towards two degrees. She recognises that, as a single foster carer, I need to have someone to talk to at times and she’s always there for me. My foster child often asks why she can’t be his social worker too!’

Shirley Peden

Shirley has been working in social care for seven years, spending the last two years with Barnardo’s Scotland as a social worker.

Shirley took over as supervising social worker for Evelyn McLaren during a particularly difficult time in her fostering journey. Despite not feeling in the best place to begin work with a new social worker, the McLarens found that she was a breath of fresh air. They credit Shirley with helping them through a tough patch, giving them the tools to assess their situation and look at things in a positive way.

Shirley is reliable and non-judgemental with a gentle, sensitive and calming manner. She goes above what is expected and provides outstanding support for her foster carers.

Evelyn, who nominated Shirley for this award, said: ‘She has been life-changing for us as foster carers, through her support, advice and actions. She brings positivity to every situation and always reminds us of what a difference we are making, encouraging us to continue even in tough times. She provides us with the emotional and intellectual support to allow us to function as carers and to develop and maximise our own potential which in turn improves the lives of children in our care.’
Caitlyn Dodds

Caitlyn, who is 14 years old, hasn’t had the easiest of times in recent years, yet has shown great maturity in supporting her mother with fostering, as well as excelling in her own life.

Caitlyn has fully embraced her role as a daughter of a foster carer, even after losing her dad unexpectedly in 2015. Despite this tragic event, Caitlyn and her mother Shirley decided to return to fostering within months and now have two children in placement. Caitlyn has developed strategies to manage and understand some very challenging situations, showing a great deal of empathy. She has been paramount in the decision for her mum to now adopt one of the children currently living with them.

Alongside her commitment to foster care, Caitlyn is also a champion swimmer who is on track for the Commonwealth and Olympic games. She also manages to succeed at school and participate in promoting fostering with her local service, despite hours spent in the pool training.

Supervising social worker, Naomi Marjoribanks, who nominated Caitlyn said: ‘Caitlyn helps us to improve our service and supports young people through their journey. She shows a great deal of empathy towards others, and despite dealing with a number of challenges in her own life, she always supports fostering.’

Troy Hughes

Troy may only be nine years old but he has already demonstrated compassion and understanding beyond his years. After being adopted by foster carers Susan and George, he has become an important part of their fostering family, showing overwhelming kindness and consideration.

Troy has to share his parents’ time and attention more than most, with foster siblings and a brother with complex needs, but he never shows any jealousy or resentment. On the contrary he welcomes children into the home with open arms, leaving one of his own teddies on the bed for when a new child arrives.

Recently he showed particularly mature understanding for one of these children as they prepared for adoption. He was found comforting the four-year-old girl as they looked through her new ‘family book’, telling her that although she would be sad to leave them, he knew that she would be happy with her new mummy and daddy, just like he was with his.

Kay Cooper, supervising social worker for Troy’s parents, nominated Troy for the award, saying: ‘Troy is the most kind, thoughtful and caring nine-year-old that I have ever had the pleasure to work with. He is a credit to his parents and his kindness reflects the way they parent all the children in their family.’

Rebekah Kitchell

Rebekah has been part of a fostering family since the age of three and now, at the age of 25, her parents want to recognise her for everything that she has done for looked after children, not only those in her own home but within the wider community.

Rebekah is a shining example of sons and daughters of foster carers. She was an instrumental part of one of the first ‘Children who Foster’ groups in her area, even helping other local authorities to set up their own.

She is an advocate for the young people in her parents’ care, offering a listening ear to them at any time of the day or night. Despite working hard to complete her photography degree, Rebekah still found time for her foster siblings, even including them in one of her university projects. She has contributed so much, expecting nothing back in return and now provides respite care for her parents.

Her mother, Janet Kitchell, who nominated her for this award, said: ‘She is loving, generous, giving and kind and is there for anyone, sometimes to her own detriment. She would tell you that fostering has made her the young woman she is today and that she is a better person having fostered.’
Samantha Bowen
Samantha, who fosters for Rhondda Cynon Taf, is a shining example of resilience and perseverance. She became a foster carer in her twenties after she was forced to retire from the army. She received devastating injuries following an attack on her camp in Iraq but found therapy through sport, representing Great Britain in sitting volleyball and shotput at the London 2012 Paralympic Games.

She cares for a little girl and inspires her to keep fighting with her strength, commitment and positivity. Samantha even gave up her place with Team GB at the Rio Paralympics last year so she could be there for the girl in her care.

Samantha recently made the decision to have her leg amputated and is working with her foster daughter to return to full mobility. She ensures that life does not get the better of her and stays determined.

Sian Hickman, who nominated Samantha for the award, said: 'Sam continues to be positive regardless of what life throws at her. She shows the girl in her care that anything is possible. Neither of them have had an easy ride in life but they spur each other on and never give up.'

Carol and Nigel Cochrane
Carol and Nigel have been foster carers for 13 years with Foster Care Associates in Northern Ireland. Their dedication, devotion and selflessness have shone through in their fostering, particularly for the eldest child in their care, who has been with them since the age of four. Now 13, he has very complex needs but since being with the Cochranes he has made such an improvement. His joy in life and his laughter is described as 'infectious' by friends.

The couple research additional aids to support his learning and have created a wonderful sensory environment for him. Not only have they made huge changes to their home over the years to accommodate for his needs and they regularly sleep on a sofa bed in his room to ensure they can attend to his needs around the clock. Even when times are tough, the couple have been there for him and the other child they care for.

Denise Wilkinson
Denise has been fostering with Kirklees Social Services for 19 years, but has been a foster carer for most of her life, starting in her twenties.

She is known for her loving and inclusive nature as well as going the extra mile for children in her care, and in particular the young person who nominated her for this award, who grew up in Afghanistan and only knew a life of gunfire and horror before coming to live with Denise.

She greeted him with open arms, making him a welcome buffet of his favourite food. She told him from the start that, through thick and thin, they would get through life's barriers together. She supported him right through college and university. He has now completed his Masters and says one of his proudest moments was having Denise stand next to him at his graduation ceremony.

The entire family has made him feel like a 'normal kid' thanks to their loving and caring nature.

He says: 'Denise gave me a second chance at life. She gives endless love and support, giving me a home, not just a place to survive. As a result of living with Denise I've learnt so much about life and how to love.'

Supported by Endsleigh
Endsleigh Insurance is proud to support the Outstanding Contribution by a Foster Carer Award. Endsleigh Insurance, a Cheltenham-based UK insurance intermediary, has been working in partnership with The Fostering Network since 2009. We understand the challenges foster carers face when applying for a mortgage and feel passionate about the service we provide. We support individuals throughout the mortgage process from application through to completion.
Amanda and Ian Hurst

Amanda and Ian began fostering for Barnardo’s Cymru 15 years ago, after having five children of their own, and were determined to foster children with learning difficulties who had been unable to find placements elsewhere. Their work has been outstanding and full of success stories, including helping a boy with severe learning difficulties, attachment difficulties and challenging behaviour to become head boy at his school.

The couple encourage their young people to develop talents, whatever they may be, taking them to clubs and groups or even driving them across the country to perform at a folk music festival! They still advocate for their first fostered young person, driving regularly to Bolton from south Wales to see her and attend best interest meetings despite her leaving their care eight years ago.

The couple sadly lost their long-term foster daughter recently and they supported the entire family through their grief. Despite this unexpected loss, they are ready to give another child a loving home.

The couple’s daughter who nominated them, Becca Hurst, said: ‘They have fostered some children and young adults who present extremely difficult and, at times, violent behaviours, but they always try to look beyond, find the reason for the behaviour and support the children to take control. “No” is not in their vocabulary’

Shane Goodwin

Staff from our corporate partners Dreams have been raising money for us throughout the year. Shane is one of their most dedicated and passionate fundraisers. As a divisional manager he has raised over £5,000 already this year with the help of his team, known as ‘the Spartans’.

Some of his adventures include the Paris Half Marathon, the Great North Run and the Manchester Half Marathon along with a number of other 10k running events. He has inspired his colleagues to join him on various runs and the group are known for making entertaining promotional videos, updating us on their latest fundraising efforts. He has gathered some fantastic prizes for raffles and pays all of the race entry and travel costs himself, boosting the totals even further.

Shane’s fundraising has not only helped a cause close to his heart, but has also given him the chance to achieve a personal goal, losing two stone in weight over the past year. He says the hardest part is missing bread and chocolate!

Philip Jacob, fundraising manager at The Fostering Network, said: ‘We are delighted to honour Shane’s dedication with this award. We wish him luck in reaching his £10,000 target for 2017 and thank him and the rest of the team at Dreams for all of their hard work raising money to support our work.’
Flintshire County Council

Flintshire County Council recognises the valuable role that foster carers play within the community.

With four employees already working and fostering for Flintshire County Council, they also recognise the challenge of balancing work and fostering. Employees who already work in the community can have the ideal skills for fostering, and the support of their employer can make a big difference when making the decision to become foster carers.

The chief officer team at Flintshire County Council gave their full support to the fostering friendly policy when presented by the fostering service. They are now Fostering Friendly employers, offering flexible working arrangements and extra leave entitlement for staff who foster with the local authority. Since implementing the new policy in November, they have received three further enquiries from staff interested in becoming foster carers who bring excellent and appropriate skills from their line of work.

Flintshire was the first local authority in Wales to become one of The Fostering Network’s Fostering Friendly employers and hope that their actions will encourage more local authorities, partner organisations and businesses in the area to follow suit.

Supported by Partnerships in Children’s Services

Partnerships in Children’s Services (PICS) is a family of independent fostering agencies with a shared vision of providing a better future to children and young people who are looked after. Across our four agencies, we have over 30 centres throughout England and Scotland, with many rated ‘Outstanding’ by Ofsted. These awards are a wonderful opportunity to recognise the incredible work of professional foster carers and the social work teams that support carers, children and young people. It is also a unique opportunity to recognise children and young people who have needed the loving support of all the individuals and teams involved, to ensure their futures are brighter.

Corinne Porter

Corinne started fostering with Greater London Fostering in 2012, when she was only 26.

Corinne, whose motivation to foster came from her own parents who were foster carers from the time that she was six, is a passionate and dedicated foster carer for sibling groups. She has a fantastic reputation with local authorities and the birth families of the children that she cares for.

Corinne is determined to keep sibling groups together where at all possible, and she prides herself on having provided a warm, loving and secure home to the seven sibling groups that she has cared for so far. When children come into Corinne’s care she is quickly able to build a relationship with them, identify their individual needs, and do everything in her power to develop their strengths. When children have moved on, either to adoption or to return to their birth families, they leave with a new set of skills and positive behaviours, as well as cherished memories.

Corinne’s commitment to keeping brothers and sisters together was best demonstrated when a sibling group of three who she had looked after previously needed to return to foster care. The children begged their social worker to be able to move back in with Corinne, who understood the importance of stability for these children and gladly welcomed them back into their home, despite the fact that she was caring for another sibling group already. With help from her robust support network, Corinne was able to provide care to all five children with her usual mix of patience, energy, love and fun.

Corinne’s supervising social worker, Imani Bartholomew, who nominated her, said: ‘I think Corinne is an exemplary foster carer, she is committed to her own learning, attends so much training and is always available to support other foster carers. She has done fantastic work with sibling groups, with her positive “can do” attitude meaning that brothers and sisters have been able to stay together.’
We would like to thank everyone who has made this year’s Fostering Excellence Awards possible.

We would particularly like to thank our corporate partners Dreams, Britain’s leading bed specialist, who are helping us to raise awareness of fostering in their 178 stores and have held numerous fundraising events to support us to continue our work.

We would also like to give our special thanks to ctn group who have chosen The Fostering Network as their charity of the year.

And finally, we would like to thank Partridges for kindly donating the printing of this programme and tickets for the awards.

Thank you to our award supporters
Jon Broad
Endsleigh Insurance
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Thank you to our judges
Tosin Alabi
Julie Barclay-Clark
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