**FOSTER CARE FORTNIGHT 2013: GET IN THE FRAME**

Planning is well under way for Foster Care Fortnight 2013. Following on from the success of our 22 Minutes campaign in 2012, we are asking everyone with an interest or connection to fostering to Get in the Frame for 2013!

The Fostering Network will be placing celebrities and politicians in our picture frame for our national campaign to highlight the need for thousands of foster carers across the UK.

We are holding workshops in York (13 January), Edinburgh, (24 January), Birmingham (30 January) and London (13 February) to show you how you can place your fostering service ‘in the frame’ and join other fostering services across the UK to raise awareness, and encourage people with the right skills to foster to come forward.

Workshop places are filling up fast – to book yours go to www.fostering.net/events or for more information call James Foyle on 020 7620 6443.

**HOUSING BENEFIT REFORMS**

As many of you have been in touch to enquire, the government’s proposals for housing benefit reform could have a significant impact on foster carers in England, Wales and Scotland. With rooms occupied by fostered children set to be excluded from the financial calculation for housing benefit, we are asking for local authorities to tell us how they intend to manage the issue.

If you haven’t done so already and would like to contribute your thoughts, please contact campaigns@fostering.net

**10 YEARS IN WALES**

To mark its 10th anniversary, the Fostering Network Wales has published *Fostering: 10 Years On*, a new report looking at what has changed over the last decade and the challenges that lie ahead for foster care in Wales.

As we’ve seen across the UK, the number of children in foster care in Wales has continued to rise, now at an all-time high. On any one day, more than 4,400 children live with over 3,000 foster carers across the country. We estimate at least 550 new foster families are needed to meet this demand.

You can read or download the full report at www.fostering.net/wales

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22 trees in Bradford

Twenty-two trees have been planted in the Looked-After Children’s woodland in Roberts Park, Saltaire, to symbolise that nationally, a child goes into care and needs fostering every 22 minutes.

The Forest of Bradford project unites Bradford Metropolitan District Council with Bradford Environmental Action Trust, with funding for the trees provided by the Big Tree Plant Fund.

The first tree was planted by star of stage and screen Gareth Gates, the son of Bradford Council foster carers, and Philip Igo, a care leaver who now attends university.

The event provided a good opportunity for local media coverage for fostering, allowing the service to get its recruitment message across. Contact me for extra advice and support to produce your fostering press releases.

Bedfordshire hosts joint workshop

A diverse range of activities greeted the sons and daughters of foster carers in Central Bedfordshire as part of their Kids Who Share scheme.

As well as the excitement of a tobogganing and snowboarding trip to the SNO!zone in Milton Keynes, the group also held first aid training and drama workshops to which looked-after children were also invited. Not only was the first aid qualification a useful addition to the young people’s CVs, the drama workshop provided a great opportunity to see foster care from each other’s perspective. The theme – Walk a Mile – allowed each group to consider what it would be like entering a new home for the first time, and conversely what it would be like to welcome someone and share their possessions and parents.

Each participant took their turn to present their views, with everyone deeming it a great success. The service is set to investigate other opportunities for these two groups to come together to broaden their understanding.

How do other services bring foster children and sons and daughters together to share experiences and learn together? If you have examples, please do get in touch.

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As part of their Sons and Daughters’ Week celebrations, Flintshire County Council’s fostering service worked with their foster carers’ sons and daughters to produce the Kids Guide to Fostering – Cool to Care.

The guide contains the honest and often endearing view points from children who foster. It also features a nice acronym for fostering:

- **F**un
- **O**pportunity to learn
- **S**ad to say goodbye
- **T**each each other children about it
- **E**ach child is appreciative
- **R**emind you how lucky you are
- **I**hope for the best future for them
- **G**reat times we have

Many prospective foster carers sight the potential impact on their own children as a barrier to pursuing a fostering application. Do consider involving your foster carers’ sons and daughters as part of your information sessions. For those of you that do so already, please get in touch to tell me how as it would be great to hear your experience.

Foster carers for Westminster City Council, part of the tri-borough fostering and adoption service, have been honoured by Her Majesty the Queen in recognition of their service to children.

Maureen and Tony Coumbe received their MBEs having fostered 48 children aged under five years in a fostering career spanning 21 years. Their nomination followed a spell by Maureen helping out at a local primary school in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, with a teacher so impressed with her that she established support for the couple’s nomination.

The New Year’s Honours are a fantastic way to acknowledge the outstanding achievement of your foster carers. Shortlisting can be difficult but do consider those foster carers that have gone above and beyond to consistently support children and young people in their care and have made a fantastic contribution to their fostering community, along with other deserving characteristics.

The process can take 12 to 18 months, so there is no deadline to submit your nominations. More information can be found at www.gov.uk/honours/nominate-someone
attracting and keeping carers

Thank you to everyone that has been in touch sharing their news and good practice. There has been a fantastic array of innovative recruitment campaigns in 2012, please do get in touch with your news for 2013. Enjoy the festivities!

Have a very merry Christmas!

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