



## Support Matters

News, views and information from Support After Adoption

Summer 2015



### Adoption Support Fund Launch

May 1st saw the national roll-out of the Adoption Support Fund which was piloted in 10 local authorities through 2014. This will bring much needed additional therapeutic support to adopted children and their families, from a Government fund of £19.3 million for 2015-16. Support from the fund is available after the adoption court order and can be used to purchase services from the private and voluntary sector, as well as local authorities and Child and Adult Mental Health Services (CAMHS). The fund can approve applications submitted prior to the adoption order for services to be provided after it is issued.

This means that in Nottinghamshire and for Nottinghamshire placed children in the first three years after the order, Support After Adoption (or your assessing adoption worker if the placement is pre-order) can apply for funds for therapeutic work which your child needs, including therapeutic life story work,

attachment therapies, sensory integration work, therapeutic assessments and much more.

Importantly, applications to the fund can be made for children up to and including the age of 18 (or 25 with an Education Health Care Plan).

Adopters from the pilot authorities feel they have had more say in the provision offered and have been positive about the outcomes for their children, whilst the local authorities have been able to develop more resources for the longer term.

For more information on the Adoption Support Fund, visit [www.adoptionsupportfund.co.uk](http://www.adoptionsupportfund.co.uk)

Support After Adoption will also keep you informed via Adoption Home and training events. Please contact us for an assessment of adoption support needs if you feel this support is relevant for your child.

### contents

Welcome from the Team Managers	2
News from Adopted Young People's Events	3
Family stories	4
Theraplay	5
Brain based parenting	6
Adoption and fostering collections in Nottinghamshire libraries	7
Adopted adult's story. Who am I?	8
Adoption conversations	9
A birthday is for life	9
Education, Health and Care Plans	10
Help at school	11
Parent Partnership Service	11
Emotional impact of moving a child on. A foster carer's view	12
Adoption support workers	13
Being a PAL	13
5-8's family fun days	13
Child sexual exploitation	14
Focus group opportunity	15
Picnic	15
Useful numbers and dates for your diary	16

## Welcome from the Adoption Service Manager Tracey Coull

Hello - I am writing to introduce myself as the new Adoption Service manager. I took up this role at the end of April having come across from the fostering service, where I was the team manager for Newark fostering and also managed the fostering recruitment and project officers.

I have worked in health and social care since 1983 in a variety of settings including voluntary and private providers. The majority of my career has been in achieving permanence for children through fostering or adoption and I remain passionate about achieving good outcomes.

For the past five years I have had the privilege of being a panel member on Thursday Adoption panel (most recently as vice chair). I will have met some of you in this role and look forward to meeting many more of you over the coming months at upcoming events and training.



## Welcome to our 2015 Support Matters - Keeping in touch with you

We hope you find this an interesting edition of our annual newsletter. Thanks to all those who have contributed, especially those who have shared their personal experiences.

We have produced a newsletter for many years but plan to change this to email bulletins so that we can keep in touch with you more often. There will still be hard copies for those adoptive families without email addresses.

We are also exploring the possibility of using Twitter as some adopters have told us they would prefer this. In the meantime we advertise our services and courses on the adoption pages of Nottinghamshire County Council's website: [www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/adopt](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/adopt) and on Adoption Home. You will find new items on the website including videos of adopters sharing their experiences. The website is

being developed over the coming months.

As well as very useful resources, Adoption Home has a news page which you as adopters can also add to - we'd love you to share any relevant items with other adopters there!

We will be delighted to have your comments on this newsletter and your contributions to include in our e-bulletins. Perhaps you may even be interested in joining the focus group which Mark writes about later in this newsletter. We look forward to hearing from you!

Kind regards,

*Pat Rajan,  
Team Manager*

## Bon voyages and welcomes!

Noel Cooper, Letterbox and Family Social Worker has now moved on to be an Independent Reviewing Officer in Rotherham – thank you Noel for your dedication and especially for your work with adopted teenagers! Thanks also to Nicola Iodice who has been here as a Social Work Assistant since October 2014 helping with Letterbox and with life story

books in particular. Nicola is staying with the Council as a Child Protection Social Worker.

For those of you who remember Rachel Coombs, first manager at Support After Adoption, you may be interested to know that Rachel has now retired after over 30 years in Nottinghamshire!

Hi,



# News from adopted young people's events

My name is Abby Davis and in March 2015 I joined the Support After Adoption Team.

I qualified as a social worker and started work with Nottinghamshire in 2011, supporting families that were struggling and whose children were on a Child in Need Plan or a Child Protection Plan. I then transferred to the Permanence Team, whose main duties are to support children with a plan of adoption, find their adoptive family and support them through to an Adoption Order. I undertook life story work and supported their carers, birth and adoptive families.

I then became Family Welfare Co-ordinator in a through school (children aged 4 to 18), which means that I was the key person in school who managed the safeguarding issues. During this time I witnessed the struggles that adopters and adopted children can face whilst at school. After six months I realised that I was thoroughly missing being a part of adoption!

I have a range of experience, including Theraplay training and I am very much looking forward to applying and developing my knowledge at Support After Adoption, where I shall have full responsibility for the range of work, including working in the Letterbox scheme with Bev Goodwin and Rita Townsend.

## Best Wishes

Our adopters training co-ordinator, Rachael Ellis, has moved to our Fostering Futures team after seven years of organising adopters learning events. We'd like to offer Rachael our heartfelt thanks for all her dedication and welcome Louise Copping to the role.



The first big news for us is that Julianne Tring, our Adoption Youth Worker, has now sadly moved on from her role

with adoption after eight years. Julianne is a fantastic worker, very popular with young people and vital in the shaping of the service. Many thanks to Julianne from all of us! And welcome to Scott Johnson, who has taken on the role with enthusiasm and energy!



The range of events for children this year has expanded with the first events for ages 5-8 and their parents. These days have been popular and will continue twice yearly. We have also continued with Ten 'til Tea events in partnership with Adult Community Learning, Libraries and Fostering. There is a learning theme and the next one will run on Saturday 7th Nov in the south of the county, look out for details on Adoption Home.

Events for 8-12 and 13-18 year olds have continued, with graffiti art, cooking, water sports, climbing, dance, team sports and various arts and crafts. The events give adopted young people a chance to meet together, build their self-esteem, confidence and social and relational skills. Please note we no longer call them 'activity days', as this name is used for 'matching' days; we hope our young people will come up with their own name.

Adopted young people may need additional support during the event so we offer the following:

- Visual timetable of the day and activities
- Help for young people to make a morning/afternoon plan
- Staff to help the younger people engage in the activities available
- Structured lunchtime with staff to help the young people choose buffet food and also socialise whilst having lunch
- Clear and consistent approach to any behaviour which is aggressive or anti-social.

Parents and young people can visit events, if children haven't attended before, to minimise anxieties. Parents are also welcome to stay with their child where necessary.

For more information please contact Allison Lindley 07834 941221 ([allison.lindley@nottsc.gov.uk](mailto:allison.lindley@nottsc.gov.uk)).



Scott Johnson

# Family Stories

Everyone's journey into adoption, as a child or as a parent, is individual and unique to them. The Nottinghamshire Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), Children Looked After (CLA) and Adoption Service support the adoption network, young people and families at any given time within the adoption process and continue to marvel at the resilience of children and parents as they have moved through their personal experiences to the point of referral to our team.

Within our service we recognise the strengths which adoptive parents bring to the lives of their children, and the joy that these relationships can bring. However, our referrals are often filled with despair, hopelessness, fear, anxiety, worry and overwhelming emotional and physical demands for parents and children alike. The journey into seeking support can in itself prove challenging and painful and often this is being sought when families feel at their most vulnerable.

There can be a sense that others do not and cannot understand the challenges and demands, the hopes and the fears and with the uniqueness of each situation this is of course true. On the dyadic developmental psychotherapy (DDP) network website ([www.ddpnetwork.org](http://www.ddpnetwork.org)) there is

an area for parents and carers and we would recommend taking a look – particularly at the family stories. Jennifer's account as a single mum is a moving description of her personal journey through adoption. Jennifer refers to contradictions within her daughter's behaviour which will be familiar to many – being overly confident yet constantly fearful; in need of physical touch but where 'cuddles' turned to pinching and hurt; polite, charming and funny for professionals over full blown rages at home which could last several days. This is such a movingly honest account of Jennifer's relationship with her daughter and resonates with many of the conversations we have with adopters on a daily basis.

Whilst no one can know what your personal experience is, we do live at a time when understanding has increased and our access through books, seminars, websites and You Tube to emerging thinking and interventions is almost as overwhelming as the challenges themselves.

However, within this there is an increasing understanding of the role of sensory integration, Theraplay and DDP as

ways of supporting our children and being with them in a way which can enable regulation, understanding and a sense of being understood – belonging. Jennifer's story testifies to this – not an easy, straightforward journey, not one devoid of emotional pain and sacrifice, but one of being in a relationship, communicating to the other a sense of understanding and a narrative for those confusing feelings which lead to children who have experienced trauma and separation, being five years old but needing 'the care, attention and gentleness of a baby'; being 16 but needing 'the boundaries and care of an 11 year old'.

Reading accounts like Jennifer's reminds us of the challenges, the joys and the hopes of parent child relationships and often the real life experiences of others and can offer us the greatest hope for the future – although Jennifer cautions us to do this with patience.

Learning from others appears to be an essential part of the adoption journey, from other children, other parents, from authors and writers, from therapists and researchers – but perhaps most of all from learning from your child just what it is they need for them to reach their potential through us joining with them in their turmoil and confusion and sticking with them through their process.



## Ten 'til Tea: Family learning for adoptive and fostering families

On Saturday 22nd November 2014 adoptive and fostering families were welcomed to Mansfield Library for a fun day of family learning from ten until tea. The event, organised by the adoption, fostering, adult community learning and library services, provided practical ideas from making rockets and playing games to storytelling with children's author and illustrator Steve Smallman and a presentation from the Virtual School. Breakfast and lunch were included giving parents, carers, children and staff time to socialise together. Finally, Councillor Kate Foale presented the 18 children and 14 adults with goodie bags which included books and vouchers.

**“Very supportive time spent with other adults and professionals sharing and listening to experiences.”**

**“A good relaxed atmosphere. Can't wait for the next one.”**

**“Good informative discussion with LAC Achievement Officer and will loan the books discussed from the library.”**

**“Helping us to play together as a family without outside distractions.”**

Book recommendations:

*Inside I'm hurting: Practical Strategies For Supporting Children with Attachment Difficulties in School* by Louise Michelle Bomber.

*What About Me?: Inclusive Strategies to Support Pupils with Attachment Difficulties Make it Through the School Day* by Louise Michelle Bomber.

These titles can be reserved through any library in the county.

# Theraplay within the home

**Theraplay is a child and family therapy for building and enhancing attachment, self-esteem, trust in others, and joyful engagement. It involves play and healthy interaction between parents and children that is personal, physical and fun. Theraplay creates an active, emotional connection between the child and parent or carer, resulting in a changed view of the self as worthy and lovable and of relationships as positive and rewarding.**

Here are 4 simple suggestions of ways you can use Theraplay techniques in the home with younger children:

**Twinkle Twinkle Song** (same tune as mainstream version) 'Twinkle twinkle little star, what a special boy/girl you are, soft (*colour*) hair and two soft cheeks, two (*colour*) eyes from which you peek, Twinkle twinkle little star, what a special girl/ boy you are.' This is a nurturing moment between child and carer/parent and shows the child you are noticing their special features.

**Blanket/Sheet Swing** Lay a sheet/blanket out on the floor, place the child in this if they feel comfortable, pick up each corner (2 or more people) and swing him/her singing rock-a-by-baby. At the end, lay the child back down on the floor, wrap him/her in the sheet, and one person will pick up the child and cuddle him/her. The swinging/rocking motion is excellent for attachment as it builds trust, and the cuddle at the end is a positive form of physical touch.

**Hand Print** Put some cream on the child's hand and place it on some coloured paper and help the child by pressing their hand gently on the paper. Take the hand away and shake some talcum powder on the paper and shake away the excess and you should have a handprint. This technique incorporates touch between the parent and child and also gives the parent/carer the chance to notice the child (can also be done with feet).

**Balloon Tennis:** Hold hands and see how many times you can keep the balloon in the air using different parts of your body such as head, elbows, knees etc. This activity is about working together as a team.

SAA and Adoption CAMHS service have workers trained in Theraplay techniques who can provide support to families, where more intensive Theraplay is required. For more information, please contact Support After Adoption on 01623 437988.

To find out more about Theraplay, please sign up to the Theraplay workshop on **3 November 2015** via [www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/adopt](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/adopt)



# Key messages from Jon Baylin's brain based parenting conference

Jon Baylin spoke at a conference for Nottinghamshire adopters and foster carers last year. The main focus of his talk was to consider brain based parenting and how our experiences 'wire' our brains. Here are a few of the key messages from the conference:

- Children who experience abuse and neglect learn early self defence and suppress their need for comfort from caring adults
- **The child may struggle to accept care and support** from their parents due to early mistrust of adults
- Children who have experienced neglect are **hyper-vigilant**. Sights and sounds are extremely powerful to the child

- A child can be very sensitive to these sensory messages and can feel threatened or misread situations easily. This could mean the **child sees a caring parent as an unsafe person**
- The child's brain is easily triggered into an alarm and alert state
- To affect change parents need to create a new and different relationship with their child
- **Parents are the agent of change for their child**
- Positive parent-child interaction promotes brain development
- The child will need lots of **repetition** as he/she can't learn quickly from new experiences
- Being **empathic** and using a light, playful, storytelling tone of voice is vital. It's the tone of voice that connects with the child's brain not the words
- Parents need to **connect with their child before they correct** behaviour: empathy allows this connection to occur
- It is helpful for parents to be **curious** with their child, not judgemental
- The **child's brain needs to interact with an adult's brain that is calm and working well**
- Adults will often need to use words for the child to interpret vocally how the child may be feeling, as child will be unable to say/know this themselves
- **Caring for a child can be painful for the parents** if the caring is not reciprocated. Parent can feel rejected and abandoned. Children can also push their adopter's own 'buttons' (past experiences of not feeling safe or being rejected/abandoned)
- When these experiences of rejection are prolonged, a parent's brain can switch off to suppress the emotional pain being felt (**blocked care**). Parents are then unable to respond to the child in a caring and emotional manner
- In these situations **parents need support** to recognise their blocked care, make sense of their own attachment history, what their triggers are and receive empathic support to enable recovery
- Finally, it is so important to **acknowledge the child's mistrust and try not to take it personally**.

Allison Lindley  
Support After Adoption



# Adoption and fostering collections in Nottinghamshire libraries

Having been adopted myself, I could see the value of introducing special collections into our libraries that would help families to understand and deal with their different situations. Together with staff from children's social care we came up with a list of titles that were relevant, eye-catching and readable.

The books selected fall broadly into three categories. Firstly there are the books which are the "how to" manuals. They describe how to deal with situations that might come up, including 'What to Expect When You're Adopting' along with others on subjects such as Theraplay, re-parenting and attachment.

Secondly, there are those from people who want to share their real life stories with others. 'As If I Was A Real Boy' describes how a ten year old boy with undiagnosed mental health problems and a single woman called Jeannie build a loving family together. In a similar vein 'Dear Mummy, Welcome' is about the adoption of a little girl called Mattie.

Finally, there are books aimed at children which help to explain their stories. 'Our Twitchy' tells a tale of adoption in a way young children can understand and relate to. The job of 'telling' may be so much easier when likened to a cow called Milfoil and a horse called Sedge and their much loved bunny, Twitchy. They have their

differences but, well, they all eat carrots don't they?

All of these books and more are available through any Nottinghamshire library. They can be borrowed for up to three weeks but you can always renew them if you haven't finished. If you can't find the book you want in your library, it can be reserved from another Nottinghamshire library for free.

Find out more about Nottinghamshire Libraries online at [www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/libraries) or call Ask Libraries on 01623 664943.

Fiona



The Summer Reading Challenge encourages children aged 4 - 11 to read up to six library books of their choice over the summer holidays. This annual challenge is produced by the Reading Agency and run in libraries across the country. This year's theme, in association with Guinness World Records™, is Record Breakers.



## Summer Reading Challenge returns to Nottinghamshire libraries



Young readers will discover weird, wonderful and wacky records from around the world as they progress through the challenge. There are collectable incentives and rewards, plus a certificate and medal for every child who completes.

The challenge is not intended to be a test of reading ability but a chance for children to develop a love and enthusiasm for reading. Children make the decisions about

the books they want to read. As long as it's a library book all reading counts! Children who find reading difficult or have a visual impairment might choose to listen to books on CD.

It's all FREE fun and a great way to keep children reading over the summer holidays. Record Breakers will be running in all Nottinghamshire libraries from 11 July – 6 September.

# Who am I? My Story

My sister and I have always known that we were adopted all be it from different birth parents. Our childhood was a very happy loved one and we were never treated any differently from our older sister who was not adopted so I never felt I was missing out on anything, but I looked different and I had always wondered who I looked like or took after. It was only after my adopted father passed away that I felt I needed to know who I was.

We had a meeting in February 2013 with my assigned social worker who was able to help and answer my many questions to enable me to start the search for my birth mother; all I had to go on was a name.

After many hours searching the internet with lots of negative results I found her, but only to learn I was two years too late and that my birth mother had died of Ovarian Cancer at only 66 years of age. I was devastated, but I wrote to her husband with the hope that maybe he would be able to show me a photo of her so at least I knew who I looked like.

As he had not long lost his wife, I knew it may be hard for him if I did look like my birth mother, but we spoke on the phone and did arrange to meet. He told me that my birth mother had been under pressure from her mother to give me up for adoption as she was an unmarried mother.

My birth mother had always tried to find me and her husband had always known about me. I learnt my birthday was always a difficult time of the year for my birth mother. He also told me that I had a brother who had also known about me and he too had tried to find me; it's like the jigsaw piece I was looking for.

It is so cruel that I was never able to meet my birth mother but I feel so blessed as I have got so much more than I set out to achieve.

The more time I spend with my brother, the more I feel connected to him; we are in touch and meet up regularly. We talk about our lives growing up and I am learning more about my birth mother. I have been welcomed into a family to whom I am truly honoured for their generosity and honesty that they have shown my partner and me.

I have still to find out more about my birth father; I only have a name to go on and I am unsure if he is still alive but if he is, and we are able to meet, that would make the jigsaw complete.

There were so many questions that only my birth mother could answer but hopefully, my birth father maybe able to answer some of them.

The support I received from the SAA team was incredible not only to me but everyone involved and for that I am so grateful and when people say I could not have done this without you I really could not have, so thank you so much.

*Rachael*





# 'A birthday is for life'

I was 52 years old this May and my birthdays were always a bitter sweet experience until last year. As I became older I have found it more difficult to celebrate my birthday, and did so to please others because my feelings were heightened by the awareness of the importance of the day; the only day in the year that I hoped my birth mother would be thinking of me. I now realise that in a way these feelings were unrealistic because she may have chosen to forget my birthday, or she may not be alive.

Last birthday was the first year I knew who she was and she knew who I was. Emotionally I became totally unreasonable on this birthday, because for the first time I told my family I didn't want to celebrate it. They were upset, but at the time I thought this is my journey which I now understand was at a 'tipping point' of emotions between my adopted family and my birth family. I was longing for recognition from my birth mother on the day. I spent the morning crying because the postman came and went with no card from my birth mother-the first birthday she had known my name and where I lived. Later I logged onto Hotmail and discovered an email sent at 2.45pm. I was delighted: it was from my birth mother saying that she hoped my day was going well. I would have liked a card but I was pleased in the end that she had remembered the day.

I have learnt a really important lesson from this and it is to recognise the love from your family you have grown up with, and live life with them. If I could celebrate with both my adoptive family and my birth family, that would be fantastic. The message is to enjoy and celebrate life as it is: the grass is not always greener. This year I shall be celebrating my birthday with my family and friends. My birth mother has not told my brothers about me so our relationship is complicated, but we speak on the phone and have met once, so hopefully I shall speak with her this year on my birthday for the first time. However it is important to make the 'now' count!

*Louise (not real name)*

## Adoption Conversations

**Having a healthy sense of identity is vital to everyone. All children are entitled to an accurate knowledge of their past or birth history and children who grow up within their birth family have direct access to this information.**

For our children and young people who have been separated from their birth family this basic information may be lost or even forgotten. It is important for children to have an understanding of what happened in the past as this will enable them to move forward and develop essential social and emotional skills.

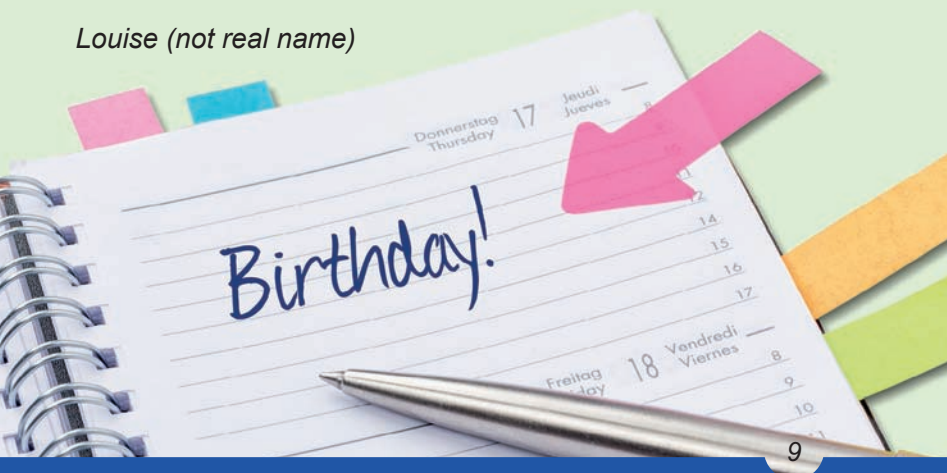
It is a sad truth that at the back of the minds of many adopted children is the thought that they are worthless and unlovable. Helping them to develop a positive sense of their identity will provide them with tools to manage their feelings.

Sharing information and talking with your child, throughout their childhood and into adulthood, about their birth history will increase their sense of worth and their understanding of who they are in the world. It can enable them to create clarity where there are fantasies, heal pain and show them that the blame does not lie with them. It also gives you an opportunity to show them why they should be proud of themselves and will strengthen your relationship.

This raises challenges for you as adopters sometimes though, as it can be hard to talk about abusive or damaging experiences and you may fear upsetting your child or reminding them that they have a birth family. It may perhaps trigger difficult memories about your own childhood.

There is help on Adoption Home in our Identity, Life-Story and Telling Rooms, and the end of June we held a life story workshop which we hope to run again.

For further support and information, please contact the Support After Adoption team. Details on the back of this publication.



# Education, Health and Care Plans

Under the Children and Families Act 2014, Statements of Special Educational Needs are being replaced by Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). For those who already have a Statement, they will gradually be transferred over to an EHCP over the next three years. Your child's school will be able to tell you when this will happen for your child.

## What's different?

EHCPs are much more child focused and use a person centred planning approach giving the child, young person or family more of a say in the process and greater control and choice over their support. Unlike SEN statements, EHCP's can continue up to the age of 25 years. Families and young people over the age of 16 can also have parts of their agreed support provided by a personal budget.

In Nottinghamshire, as part of the EHCP, there is an option to tell the child's story 'All about Me' through photos, videos, text, audio and documents using a digital scrapbook called a 'Wiki.' This is a secure and private website which is password protected by the family and which can be viewed by other professionals working with the child with the family's consent. For further information, see [www.klikin.eu/](http://www.klikin.eu/)

## Is my child eligible for an EHCP?

To be eligible for an EHCP, schools will need to demonstrate that they have made use of all the resources and funding streams that they can access to provide additional support to the child at school. This is called the 'graduated response' and children and young people do not require an EHCP to access this support. Before thinking about whether to make an application for your child, talk to their school first. The SENCO is often a good starting point: check what has been done to secure support for your child and whether there is anything else that can be offered. Sometimes schools will suggest that an EHCP is the best way forward if everything else has been tried and they will make the application with your consent.

## Where do I find out more information?

Here are some useful web sites;

[www.notts-ehcp.co.uk](http://www.notts-ehcp.co.uk)  
(explains the EHCP Pathway in Nottinghamshire)

[www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/send](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/send)  
(information about the support available locally to children and young people across the range of special needs with or without an EHCP)

*Ange Milne*  
*Service Manager (Commissioning)*  
*SEND*

An Adopters' seminar run by Ange and an adopter on EHCP is running 30th September 2015. To book, visit [www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/adopt](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/adopt)



# Help at school



The Government recognise the difficulties some adopted children and young people have in schools and have extended the Pupil Premium grant to include this group of pupils. It is for schools to use primarily in attainment, to ensure they achieve their potential. A list of frequently asked questions about the Pupil Premium is published on BAAF's website to help parents work with the schools their children attend:

[www.baaf.org.uk/webfm\\_send/3461](http://www.baaf.org.uk/webfm_send/3461)

The Virtual School for Looked After Children provide assistance to Support After Adoption (SAA) should adoptive families experience difficulties within the education setting. Parents can contact SAA who will, if they cannot answer the question themselves, get in touch with the Virtual School. As part of the statutory function of the Virtual School, training is offered to designated teachers for Looked After Children. The Virtual School ensures links are made to all vulnerable groups in schools including adopted children and young people. This helps schools address the attachment/trauma issues some pupils may experience.

Useful contacts in the school setting to help and support pupils are the class teacher; the designated teacher for Looked After Children who should be knowledgeable in the attachment and trauma difficulties some pupils face; Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) and the head teacher. Should parents feel their child's needs are greater than the school is able to deal with, working with the SENCO and a request for discussion at a family of schools' Springboard meeting can be a way forward. This will require the parents to sign a consent form for their child to be discussed by name with other professionals, including Educational Psychologists. Specific support can be planned from this.

*Sue Denholm  
Co-ordinator of the Virtual School*

For more on Education see Adoption Home where you will also find 'Lets Learn together' which includes relevant information for parents and teachers in England too.



## Nottinghamshire Parent Partnership Service is changing

The Children and Families Act 2014 brought significant changes to law relating to families and children e.g. around fostering and adoption, what happens when parents separate, and for families who have a child with a disability or special educational need.

Previously local authorities had a duty to provide advice and support around education issues for parents/carers of children with special educational needs. From September 2014 this became a duty to provide information, advice and support around health and social care issues too, for both parents and the children/young people themselves including

families with a child/young person with a disability. The existing Parent Partnership Service is therefore becoming part of a wider service covering this area of responsibility. Many features of the current service will remain but we plan a more local focus and improved interface with other services supporting families.

We know that children who are adopted may have special educational needs and disabilities, as well as needs arising from earlier life situations. This requires parents and schools to work together. We can provide parents with impartial information, advice and support about:

- what kind of support schools can provide
- what funding schools can tap into and for what
- other sources of support e.g. charities
- how to find out what is available in your area
- how to access specialist health services etc.

For further information call 0115 9482888, email [enquiries@ppsnotts.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ppsnotts.org.uk), or visit [www.ppsnotts.org.uk](http://www.ppsnotts.org.uk)

*Edwina Cosgrove  
Parent Partnership Officer*

# Emotional impact of moving a child on

“Moving a child on affects everyone” said Karen, who with husband Dennis have been fostering for 19 years. Their daughters and grandchildren are involved in helping to move children on. Karen finds referring to her grandchildren’s family life helps to prepare a child; explaining that they will soon have their own family; talking about the move, showing them pictures and videos and providing reassurance.

Karen and Dennis first moved a 2 year old girl to adoption, which was very emotional; they knew that the plan was adoption and this was always in the back of their minds. “The first meeting with adopters can be an anxious time, wondering how the children might react. Equally, it can be exciting, knowing our hard work preparing the child has come together; we feel our reward is seeing the adopter’s joy at meeting the child.”

Introductions can evoke many feelings. Adopters spend time in the foster carer’s home, learning how to care for the child and

boundaries can be hard for everyone. With experience Karen and Dennis feel more relaxed and appreciate how hard it is for adopters; perhaps feeling they are being watched or judged. Karen talks to adopters about the child’s likes and dislikes and advises on routines. This is a positive opportunity for adopters to spend time with the child, with the support of foster carers. Karen and Dennis know the importance of leaving adopters and children to bond and show the child that they are happy that they are making attachments and moving on.

“The final day can be very difficult; knowing everything we are doing together will be the last time; I try to keep positive for the child,” said Karen. “This is when the move actually hits you – it is difficult to wave ‘goodbye’ and we often spend the first night clock watching; thinking they will be doing such and such now, and we wonder how everyone is coping.

The house is quieter so we go out to break the silence”.

Their grandchildren get upset too. One has run after a car crying for a child that they became attached to and another grandchild asked; “Am I going to have a new mummy and daddy?”

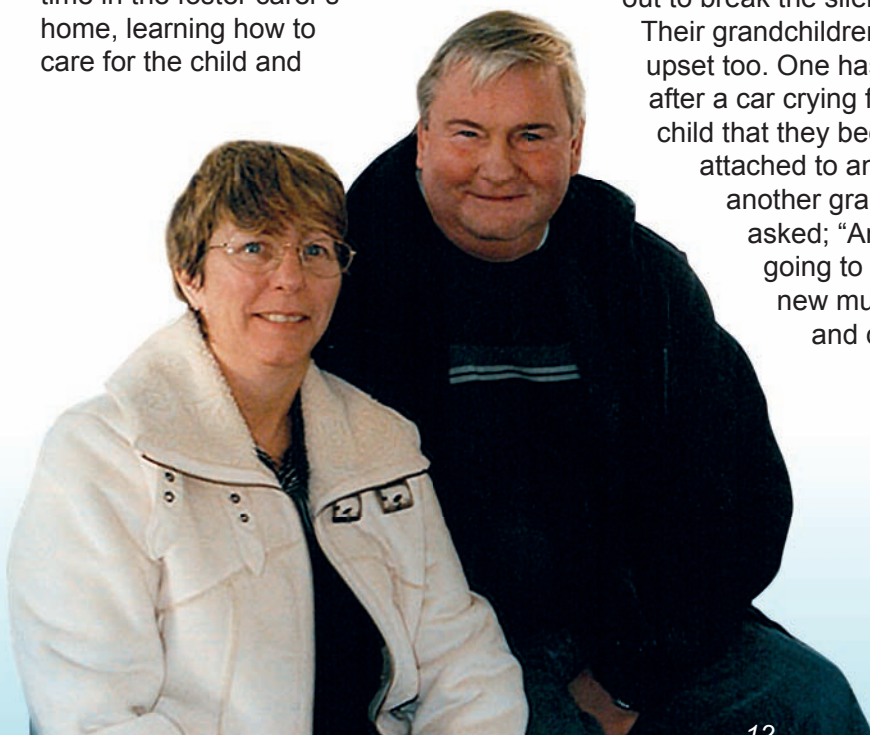
The couple feel it is important not to bottle up emotions, to talk about the child and keep them ‘alive’ as they have been a big part of their life - it can feel like bereavement. They benefit from support from family, friends and their supervising social worker.

Ongoing contact can bring emotion too. The couple have a ‘goodbye’ visit with the child six weeks after they move, meeting somewhere neutral and leaving before the family, so the child can see that they are happy for them to stay with their new family. They continue to see some children and recalled an adoptive child asking them questions about when he was a baby with them. They filled in the gaps, but were sensitive to the adopters’ feelings.

Karen and Dennis recently prepared a sibling group for adoption, which was difficult, as there wasn’t an emotional bond between them, only jealousy from the eldest. Fortunately, with the help of their grandchildren, who cuddled the baby whilst the older sibling watched, a bond developed and they were adopted together.

Karen and Dennis advise carers to prepare for the emotions that they will feel. “We focus on the success of moving a child; the fact that we have given them a good start, nice holidays and an insight into family life,” said Karen “and then we focus on the next placement”.

*Carolyn Boot  
Recruitment and Project Officer  
– Adoption and Fostering*



*Karen and Dennis*

# Adoption Support Workers

Andrea Lyle, Carolyn Makings and Sharon Saunders are specialised workers within the Adoption Service offering a range of services according to the individual child and family's needs. The team are flexible and deliver services in the home and local community, and have experience of working with children, carers and adopters when children move on to adoption from fostering.

Support can be offered on a range of issues including:

**Theraplay:** Working jointly with CAMHS to provide Therapeutic interventions.

**Attachment:** Using PACE (Play, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy) to develop positive relationships where a child feels accepted.

**Feelings and Self-Esteem:** Working with children to develop an awareness of their feelings and how to manage these and foster feelings of self-worth and self-confidence.

**Life Story Work:** Supporting parents to provide children with a structured and understandable way to talk about their history and identity.

**Practical parenting issues:** such as behaviour management, routines, eating and sleep.

**I have always enjoyed working with children throughout my working life, including those whose local authority plan was to be adopted, so to continue doing so when I retired early and become a PAL was a good choice for me, as I know adopted children have additional and sometimes complex needs compared to children living with their birth families.**

All PALS receive individual and group supervision to help support us in our work. We are a varied group with a common link of being interested in helping children through their individual difficulties. I have found the group sessions particularly valuable as we PALS can share ideas and help support each other in what can be a challenging job. Our PALS co-ordinator Sara is always available to help guide us in our role, together with the children's post adoption social workers who are present at the regular reviews.

We have the privilege to spend time with our linked children, listening to them, engaging them in activities and trying to gain their trust in the hope that we can relieve some of their stresses and help address their needs.

I have found that my time as a PAL has been an enjoyable and satisfying experience especially when I have seen my linked children work through some difficult adolescent times and have a positive awareness of their identity as adopted children.

*Jane McDermott*

For more information about the PALS scheme, please contact Sara Thomas via email: [sara.thomas@nottsc.gov.uk](mailto:sara.thomas@nottsc.gov.uk)

## 5-8's family fun days

Over the last year Adoption Support Workers and Support After Adoption have developed themed fun days for 5-8 year olds with their parents, during the summer holidays and February half term.

In February our theme was farm animals. We were joined by staff and small animals from White Post Farm. This was an enjoyable, well attended day.

“ I loved kicking a ball outside with daddy and the white bunny sitting on my lap. ”

“ Liked the biscuit shapes the best! ”

“ It was refreshing to be able to spend time with our children in a therapeutic environment that enabled us to be playful and explore their learning with new animals and activities. Learning how to make short bread shapes was a personal highlight and something we have replicated at home as an activity. ”



# Child sexual exploitation

Child sexual exploitation is very much in the news with the revelations from Rotherham and Oxford. Research from Bristol University recently suggested that two in five girls aged 13 to 17 had suffered sexual coercion of some sort, ranging from rape to being pressured into going further than they wanted. Adopted children and young people with difficulties in making and sustaining friendships who have low self-worth and perhaps sexual abuse or inappropriate sexual boundaries in their families of origin, can be particularly vulnerable.

Both boys as well as girls are at risk, especially in the virtual world of Facebook, Instagram and whatever the latest social media platform is. Knowing how to protect children from adults masquerading as their peers or from online bullying can be challenging for parents who are not so adept at electronic communication. Adoption Home has useful links to organisations that can help.

Parents Against Sexual Exploitation (PACE) have launched an information package for parents to:

- learn more about child sexual exploitation
- learn the signs and indicators of when a child might be being exploited
- appreciate the impact child sexual exploitation can have on families
- learn what to do if you suspect a child might be at risk of this abuse.

Find out more at [www.paceuk.info](http://www.paceuk.info)

In addition, talking about sex is often difficult between the generations – what is OK to them, may feel not at all OK to you. Sexting is a good example. If you find your child has been watching porn, don't get angry with them, or they may not talk to you about this again. If you have daughters, you may want to read Taniith Carey's more general guide on raising girls '*Girls Un-interrupted: Steps for Building Stronger Girls in a Challenging World*' 2015', with practical strategies to help build healthy and resilient daughters. You can find this in Nottinghamshire County Council Libraries: [www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/libraries)

## Keeping families safe

I recently attended 'Keeping Families Safe' course which was delivered by BAAF. The training provided the opportunity to look at why children who have experienced early trauma may behave in the way they do and add to tools to help. The style of the trainers was relaxed and humorous and they created a safe atmosphere to explore a challenging subject. There was lots of opportunity to look at my own family life and challenges and I was able to really benefit from some of the practical tools offered, strategies to de-escalate behaviour and the chance to meet other families. Perhaps the biggest benefit was the chance to look at my own response to my daughter's 'meltdowns'. This was the first time I had been on a BAAF course and enjoyed the supportive style of training.

*Helen  
Adoptive Mum*



# Focus group seeks members!

As an adoption agency, Nottinghamshire County Council would like to set up a focus group to look at the significance, relevance and impact of what we do in preparation, during introductions and in supporting the coming together of an adoption family.

The focus group would be made up from independent panel members and experienced adopters who are able to look back having had the benefit of several years of parenting through adoption.

The group will discuss some of the following in relation to how they have played a part in your lives:

- Preparation and training
- Background information shared about your child
- How introductions were done
- Meeting birth parents or others
- Life appreciation day
- Life story book
- Later life letter
- Contact arrangements
- Attending panel
- Social work visits
- Support

In addition to this, the group could also identify its own areas for discussion. We hope this will be a positive learning environment from which our adoption service will receive insight and consideration for future practice. We may also ask the group to contribute to written feedback or a training event.

If you are interested in making a positive contribution or would like to find out more, please contact Mark Smith, Adoption Panel Manager: email [mark.smith@nottsc.gov.uk](mailto:mark.smith@nottsc.gov.uk) or call 01623 437553.



## Adopters' summer picnic and New Year party

Do you want to meet other families in relaxed surroundings and have fun? If so, come along to one of our annual social events just for adoptive families.

We have changed these events slightly and are now inviting all our adoptive families to our annual summer picnic.

On Saturday 18th July, come rain or shine, we will be hosting the picnic at Rufford Country Park from 12 noon until 3pm. It is very informal and friends and family are welcome. We generally meet under the largest tree on the Abbey Lawns. Bring your own picnic and we will provide parachute games for the children. There are always staff around to chat with and if you would like to be introduced

to other families then let us know. In past years we have been lucky enough to use one of the large display marquees when rain has threatened – we will endeavour to do the same this year, but just in case it turns into a truly British event, please come prepared for any weather!

The New Year Party is now for families with children under 6. It is usually held on the second or third Saturday in January and will be by invitation only. As venues cater for a maximum number it will be first come first served. No date yet for 2016 but look out for further information later in the year. It's a great way to beat the post-Christmas blues!

## Useful numbers

**Support After  
Adoption phone line  
01623 437988**

Monday-Thursday: 8.30am - 5pm  
Friday: 8.30am - 4.30pm

**Out of hours  
advice service  
0800 085 8995**

Monday to Friday:  
6.00pm and 10.00pm  
Weekends and bank holidays:  
10.00am - 10.00pm

**Emergency Duty Team  
0300 456 4546**

Monday to Friday:  
5.00pm - 8.30am  
Weekends: 4.30pm on Friday  
to 8.30am on Monday

## Resources for adopters

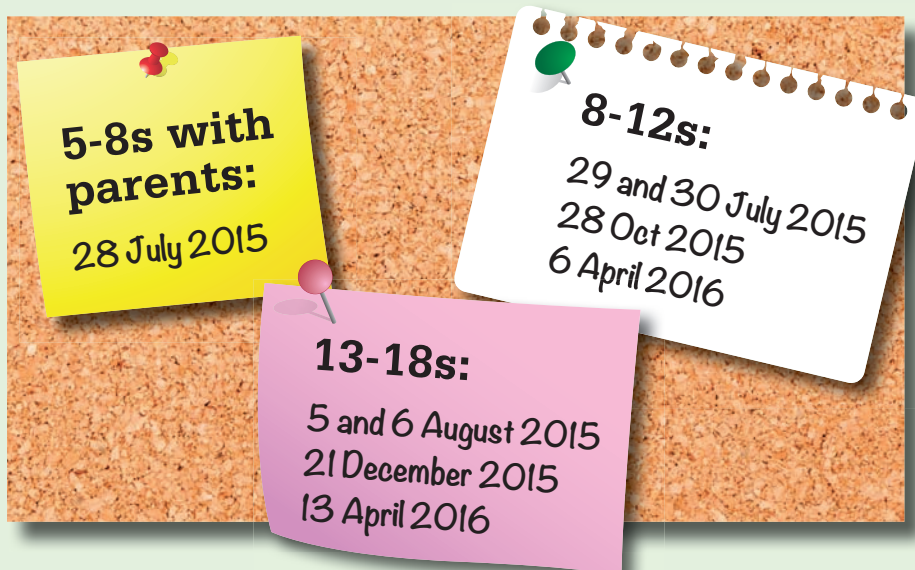
Remember, all adoptive households within Nottinghamshire have access to Nottinghamshire Adoption Home. This is a secure, password protected virtual learning environment. This website gives useful information, training and seminar opportunities. Topics include:

- attachment
- e-safety
- contact
- life story work

For access, please contact  
[coroline.tucker@nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:coroline.tucker@nottscc.gov.uk)

## Dates for your diary

Planning is already underway for this year's events. Dates for your diary are:



For further information about these days and to book a place for your child please email [scott.johnson@nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:scott.johnson@nottscc.gov.uk) or [allison.lindley@nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:allison.lindley@nottscc.gov.uk)

## Training:

Education and Health Care Plans, 30th September

Support After Adoption services and Adoption  
Support Fund, October date TBA

Theraplay for adopters, 3rd November

Education conference, Louise Bomber 4th December

Details of times and venues to follow on  
[www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/adopt](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/adopt)

If you would like to make any suggestions for future training, please contact [adoption.learning@nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:adoption.learning@nottscc.gov.uk)