

"Kindness can transform someone's dark moment with a blaze of light. You'll never know how much your caring matters." - Amy Leigh Mercree

Fostering Connections Newsletter... January 2024 edition

Dear Foster Carers

So, we are in 2024... in numerology it is a number 8 year. In Eastern philosophies the number 8 is about prosperity.

The Chinese believe that 8 is the luckiest number and is associated with good fortune and success.

Here's to you, our amazing foster parents having a good year, with a bit of extra luck thrown in when you need it!

Meet our Finance Director... David



When Fiona asked for a 'little bit about me' for the newsletter, it filled me with dread. What can I say about myself that would be vaguely interesting or exciting enough for a newsletter!

Heading up the Finance side of the agency is something that I have been used to for the past 20 or so years, from working in a local furniture shop to heading off to the city to work for Lloyds of London. I've nearly always found myself in this position... behind a PC, working with figures. A far cry from the dreams of 7 year old me, who wanted to be a farmer! But growing up in the concrete jungle of Southeast London didn't really provide that opportunity! 🐮

Six years ago, becoming a Foster Parent myself made me see the world in a brighter colour... and this led to where I am now. Still hiding behind a PC, but part of an amazing village that reminds me of the great work that we can all achieve.

Training

There are 10 extra training courses available to you...

1. Alcohol - know your limits
2. Anxiety and depression
3. Coping with loneliness
4. Coping with loss
5. Cost of living
6. Cultivating gratitude and positivity
7. Digital detox for a relaxing Christmas
8. How to reflect on the last 12 months
9. How to save money in a cost-of-living crisis
10. Peer pressure

If you would like to take any of the courses, please contact Nicole and she will allocate the training to you.

Thank you to those who have completed out of date training and a gentle nudge to others who still need to complete mandatory training.

If you are unsure, please contact us and we will let you know which training is required. Thank you.

Book Corner



Has anyone bought this book or given it as a gift?

The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse by Charlie Mackesy.

Such a lovely book...

"All four characters represent different parts of the same person," explains Mackesy "the inquisitive boy, the mole who's enthusiastic but a bit greedy, the fox who's been hurt, so is withdrawn from life, slow to trust but wants to be part of things, and the horse who's the wisest bit, the deepest part of you, the soul!"

May the pious red colour be lucky to you and may the new year be filled with good luck, charm, and best health. Happy Chinese New Year 2024

Chinese New Year, 10th Feb

Chinese New Year is mapped to the lunar calendar, so it differs every year. This year it is on 10 February. Each year is also associated with an animal – this year it is the dragon, one of the luckiest and most powerful animals in the Chinese zodiac. In Chinese Astrology, each year is also associated with an element and in 2024 it is wood.



Chinese New Year is the most important celebration in the Chinese calendar. Each lunar month is about 28 days long – the time it takes for the Moon to orbit the Earth. It starts when the Moon is at its darkest and ends when the Moon is at its brightest. Celebrations usually start the night before on Chinese New Year's Eve.



新年快乐 / 新年快樂

Happy New Year

新年快乐 / 新年快樂

“Xīnnián kuàile”, which literally means “New Year Happiness”. The pronunciation of Xīnnián kuàilè in Mandarin is 'Shin-nyen kwhy-ler'.

The upcoming year's dragon sign is perhaps the most popular zodiac creature, associated with a host of positive qualities such as nobility, wealth and wisdom.

The Chinese New Year is also known as the Spring Festival, which means wiping clean the slate of the past 12 months and opening the door to an exciting new year.

It is celebrated by Chinese communities with lion and dragon dances, fireworks, parades, flower market shopping; all of these being full of rich and colourful activities.

The giving of red envelopes filled with money to children is a common tradition.

These activities are believed to bring good luck and drive away evil spirits.



In the run-up to the new year people will clean their houses and throw away unwanted items. They will redecorate them with red couplets, lanterns, new flowerpots, and furniture, and will shop for foodstuffs for banquet specialities.

The New Year is an important family occasion. In China this is now known as Chun Yun (春运 Moving in the Spring); tens of millions of people travel on the country's vast public transport systems or via private means, to arrive home to be with their loved ones.

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Chinese New Year Activity

Decoration is a big part of Chinese New Year celebration. People spend substantial time and effort to uplift their houses and the immediate surroundings to welcome the Gods of Wealth (财神). There are said to be two Gods of Wealth: one God of the people (文神) and one God of military (武神).

Homes are decorated with lanterns...

Making a Chinese paper lantern

I shall send you an instruction sheet to show your children how to make a Chinese lantern, as well as some activity sheets for younger children.

You can also click on the link above to see how to make a lantern on YouTube.



Those who celebrate the new year coming in, hang red lanterns in and outside their houses and hang a big Chinese character LUCK (福) on the main entrance.

Traditionally if anyone sees a 'Lucky Mascot' (吉祥物) on New Year's Day, they will have good luck for the year to come. The four 'Lucky Mascots' are the Dragon, Phoenix, Unicorn and Dragon Turtle, all fictional animals which either live in the sea or fly. The Lion and Dragon dances give more of a chance to see these mythical creatures.

On New Year's Eve, traditionally people would light candles or oil lamps to keep vigil all night: this is known as Shou Sui (守岁). In this way, they drive away all evil plagues and look forward to the good luck of the New Year.

There are various activities for Shou Sui, such as eating food, having tea and Nian Gao (年糕 New Year's Cake), Tang-Yuan (汤圆), snacks, and playing Mahjong, chess or card games or simply spending time socialising with friends and family.

What Chinese New Year food do people eat?

Chinese New Year's Eve dinner is a family occasion, and the most important dinner for the entire year.

China is a vast country, so the food customs and favourite dishes vary in different regions. In many parts of Northern China, people eat "Jiaozi" (饺子 dumplings) as the most favoured dish for the New Year's Eve dinner. There are different flavours of Jiaozi with different types of fillings, such as meat, seafood and vegetables.



Wishing you health and good luck for the year ahead...

May the pious red colour be lucky to you and may the new year be filled with good luck, charm, and best health. Happy Chinese New Year 2024

We are planning a Bee Project for this spring for your children. Our bee population is in decline and much has been written about how important it is to save the world's bees.

One of our children has designed a poster of a bee garden for her school and with permission... we are proud to share it with you. A budding artist... what an amazing piece of artwork!



The prose below was shared at the last Reflective Practice... I shared on the village WhatsApp group, and it received a great response from you. Written from the child's perspective... honest & raw !

Born Wrong

'What I am about to share with you today is what I hope will change everybody's treatment to children that are "born wrong." Three years ago, I was taken away from my birth parents and told that they could not hurt me anymore. But even three years later the things they did in the past still hurt. I feel that I was born the wrong person, in the wrong place, at the wrong time. I still feel that way because I am reminded each day for three years that I am still fostered.

To our friends and peers, do not make assumptions. Do not assume that we are not wanted because we are fostered. Do not assume that we are badly behaved just because our birth parents may have been. Do not assume that our carers are not our parents because we do not call them mum and dad. We are not born wrong; we are just children.

To our families, do not leave us out of your photographs if we are not going away. Do not tell people why we are fostered, it's our stories to tell if we want to. Do not call us fostered, we are not foster children, we are not born wrong, we are just children.

To our teachers and professionals, we should not be judged by our pasts but by our present and future. We may not like you coming to our safe space, do not judge us, it is how we feel inside. Let us speak up, do not judge us, it is how we feel inside. Don't use our old names, that's not who we are inside. Do not judge us, we are not born wrong, we are just children.

To our social workers, we know you mean well but you say that we miss our birth parents, we might not. You make us talk in private because we will feel safer, we might not. You force us to do a questionnaire about our lives, we might not want to share. You take away the only professional that listens and understands us, we might not want them to go. You say that you want to go into our bedroom, we might not want to show you our room, we might want to tell you about it instead. You offer us different things for different children from different local authorities, and we feel that it's just not fair, it's not our fault. We are not born wrong; we are all just children.'

Thank you for all you do... The Fostering Connection Team