

“Promise me you’ll always remember... you’re braver than you believe, and stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think.” Christopher Robin; A. A. Milne

Fostering Connections Newsletter... February 2024 edition

Dear Foster Carers

Welcome to our February newsletter...

February is a leap year in 2024.

Leap years are necessary to keep our calendar in sync with the seasons. The Earth takes approximately 365.2422 days to complete one orbit around the Sun, which is slightly longer than 365 days.

Without leap years, our calendar would gradually fall out of alignment with the seasons.



Snowdrops are hailing that spring is on its way...

Did you know that it is prohibited to dig up wildflowers in the hedgerows and forests!



Book Corner

Corinna, our Training Director has written about one of her favourite childhood books this month.

The Secret Garden “It remains my safe place that I visualise when I need the healing power of flowers and fresh air.” 🌱



Meet Jackie, one of our amazing fosters carers.



Hello, my name is Jackie, I have been a placement plus foster carer for the last 24 years. I love my role as a foster carer; the children make my life complete, as I hope I do theirs.

I do long-term fostering as long as they feel they need to stay with me; the eldest is 21, but I think one of my boys will beat that because he’s has no intention of moving out.

I keep in touch with them all, sometimes we do have fallouts usually due to their partners, but it all gets forgotten quickly.

I hope living with me the children would say I’m fair; we do have set boundaries but mainly we have lots of fun and they are always learning new activities and having great adventures.

***The children move into my house,
And capture my heart,
I might not be their real Mother,
But you can’t tell that apart.
They learn something new,
Every single day,
We laugh and have fun,
Until the end of their stay.
I never give up,
How hard it may be,
Because I promise these children,
A loving family life,
As I am sure you can see.***

Jackie

"You don't have to be positive all the time. It's perfectly okay to feel sad, angry, annoyed, frustrated, scared and anxious. Having feelings doesn't make you a negative person. It makes you human." Lori Deschene

Training

A reminder about our extra free online 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. How To Reflect on the Last 12 Months
8. How To Save Money in a Cost-of-Living Crisis
9. Religious Holidays
10. *Peer Pressure Fostering
11. Religious Holidays

*The course 'Peer Pressure' has been designed to help carers understand peer pressure – and the negative impacts that can lead to less-than-ideal outcomes for young people.

It looks at the role of peer pressure within alcohol and substance use and in issues such as sex.

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.



Our families celebrated Shrove Tuesday

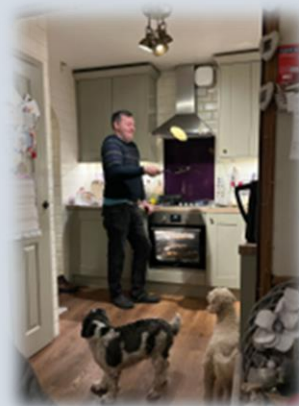
This year, it fell on February 13. The date of Pancake Day changes each year as it is determined by Easter, which also differs annually due to the spring equinox.



Action shots... Two of our foster children flipping pancakes

Followed by Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent... and then 40 days to prepare for Easter.

Another family "...had pancakes for breakfast, with lemon and sugar... other favourite toppings include bacon & cheese and golden syrup & chocolate spread."



One of our foster dads getting involved... his wife commenting, "The dogs hoping it ends up on the floor!"



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Children's Mental Health Week 5–11 February 2024

Looking after a child or young person's mental health (from NHS, Every Mind Matters)

As parents and carers, there are ways we can support our children to give them the best chance to stay mentally healthy.

Encouraging and guiding a child to think about their own mental health and wellbeing are vital skills you can teach them from a young age.

Find out how you can help a child to have good mental health, including knowing how to talk to a child about their mental health, and when to spot signs they might be struggling.

Plus get self-care tips for you, to help you look after your mental health while caring for others, and find out how to get more support if you, your child or your family need it.

Ways to support a child or young person.

Be there to listen...



Regularly ask your child how they're doing, to help them get used to talking about their feelings, and know there's always someone there to listen. You can get tips on [Young Minds: How to talk to your child about mental health](#).

Support them through difficulties...



Pay attention to how your child is feeling or behaving and try to help them work through difficulties. It may not be easy facing challenging behaviour, but try to help them understand what they're feeling and why. Learn more from [the Maudsley Charity on difficult behaviour](#).

Stay involved in their life...



Show interest in their life and what's important to them. It not only helps them value who they are but also makes it easier for you to spot problems and support them.

Encourage their interests...



Support and encourage your child to explore their interests. Being active or creative, learning new things and being a part of a team helps connect us and boost our mental wellbeing.

Take what they say seriously...



Listening to and valuing what they say makes them feel valued. Consider how to help them work through their emotions in constructive ways. [Anna Freud Centre's guide on ways to support children and young people](#) has more on this.

Build positive routines...



Try to have structure around regular routines, especially around healthy eating and exercise. A good night's sleep is also important, so have a fixed time for going to bed and getting up. The [Sleep Charity has relaxation sleep tips for children](#)

Mental health impacts every part of life... relationships, work, physical health! No matter where you are on your mental health journey, it's essential to have check-ins with yourself. This could include reaching out to a friend, family member, or counsellor to talk. Remember, to struggle with mental health is to be human. You are not alone!

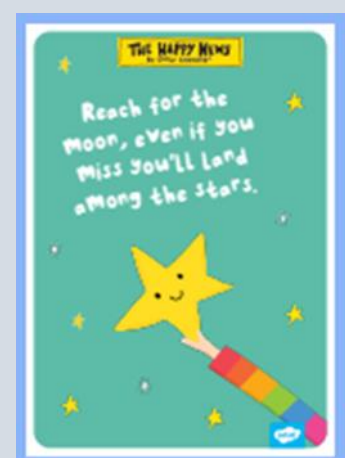
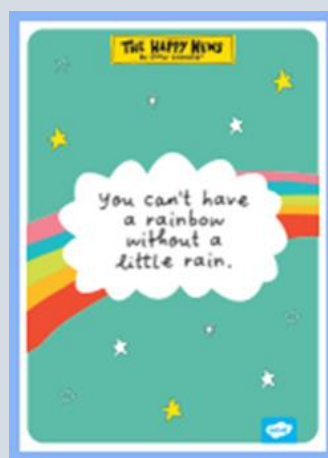
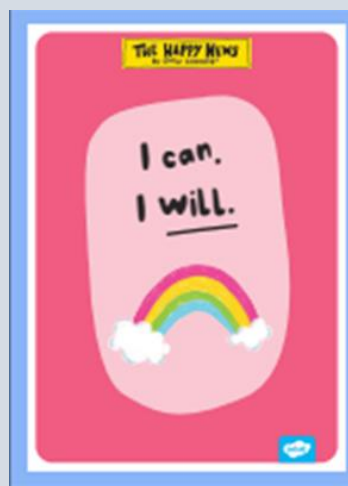
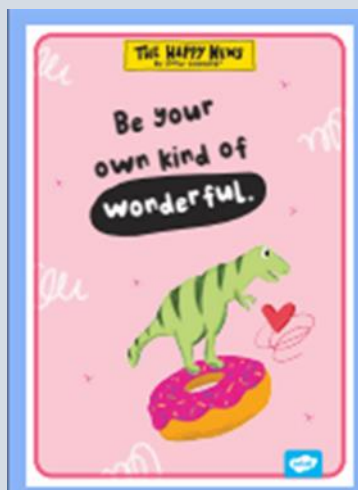
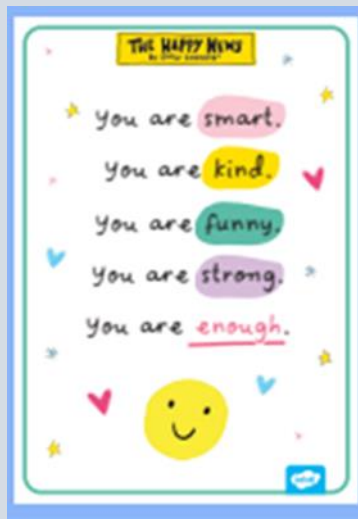
Some of this is just a gentle reminder; we know that you do an amazing job with your foster children. Please be reassured that you can contact any one of us whenever you need advice or just need to chat things over.

The Fostering Connections Team

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Children's Mental Health Week

...posters sent to families.



It is an early lesson for children... to think positive thoughts, (and some adults too) to make us feel better and bring in positive energy. If we smile... it is hard to remain negative; some say!

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Children & Young people's Page

Pen Pals

One of our foster parents mentioned the idea of our children becoming pen pals and we thought this a lovely idea.

We would like to start a project for your young people to become pen pals with others from our agency.

The letters would be sent to Fiona Martin; she will read the letter and will then forward it to the recipient young person, so that no addresses are exchanged. This will be done in order to safeguard your children.

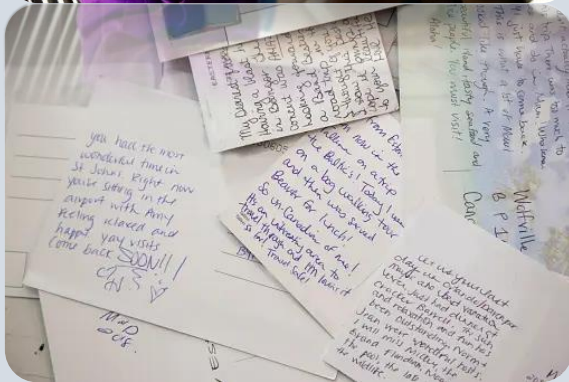
We would like this to be fun, as well as a therapeutic activity for your foster as well as birth children. It would be a way for them to share, find new friends and even an opportunity to improve writing skills for some.

All children are welcome to join in. It will be a chance to say a little about themselves.

I have added a couple of templates in this newsletter, but let your children feel free to create their own.

Some may just want to send a drawing to a pen pal. We want this to be an enjoyable activity, so no pressure of any kind.

Please contact Fiona, fionamartin@fostering-connections.com if any of your family want to join in.



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Some fun ideas for Pen Pals to share...



- ❖ There's no point in eating chips without ketchup.
- ❖ Pepperoni is the best pizza topping.
- ❖ Peanut butter is better than Nutella.
- ❖ Hot chocolate is better than a chocolate milkshake.
- ❖ Fruit counts as dessert!
- ❖ Coca-Cola is better than Pepsi.
- ❖ Round pizzas are better than rectangular ones.
- ❖ Ice cream is better than cake.
- ❖ McDonald's is the best fast-food restaurant.
- ❖ Chocolate ice cream is better than vanilla.
- ❖ You should never put pineapple on a pizza.
- ❖ A corner brownie is better than one in the middle.
- ❖ Chicken wings are better than mini drumsticks.
- ❖ In a cheeseburger, the cheese goes on top of the patty, not underneath.
- ❖ Sandwiches taste better with the crusts cut off.

Children are so creative and come up with amazing ideas.; here are a couple below. We ask that they don't share personal details or photographs of themselves.

Get to Know Me!

Dear: _____

My favorite color is .

I enjoy eating .

At school I like _____

I am a boy / girl

I am _____ years old.

From: _____

DEAR PEN PAL

Date: _____

Dear _____

I am writing you to let you know _____

I have been feeling _____ because _____

I hope that _____

and _____

One day _____

I am wishing you a _____

YOUR FRIEND,



Bee Project Update

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. I hope you liked the poster of a bee garden in last month's newsletter.

Resources will be sent soon to those who have asked to part of this project.



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