

Fostering Solutions South Carers Newsletter



MARCH 2025

**A MESSAGE FROM SOPHIE,
REGISTERED MANAGER**

Hello and welcome to the March newsletter!
I hope, like me, that you are all welcoming of the lighter mornings and longer days. It is so lovely to start the day with some daylight, and a known fact that exposure to morning sunlight profoundly affect our general sense of well-being, health and sleep.

We are now welcoming in March and the new growth of the flowers daffodils and Jonquils which will bring some new colour to Spring.

We had two children recognised in our Star of the Month, please continue to send us your children and young people's achievements so that we can celebrate them.

I am sure that you will all join us in congratulating Lianne who has taken a new role within the team as an Advanced Practitioner.

I would also like to ask you all for your support – we are working hard in our local community and we have decided to provide toys and books to a local charity run pre-school. If you have any pre-school aged toys, books, arts and crafts and puzzles that you no longer please donate them as I am sure they will be greatly welcomed and please be assured that they will be going to a fantastic cause.

Thank you to all of our children and all of you who supported our children to take part in an 'Agency Take-Over Day' in the office on the 18th of March. All of the children were amazing, they worked hard but had lots of fun. They learnt about the work that staff do for them behind the scenes and we learnt a lot from them which will help inform our practice moving forward.

We all hope to see many of you at the office on the 27th of March at our Afternoon Tea, which is a 'thank you' to you for all that you do. Please respond to the email in the newsletter if you are able to come along.

*Best Wishes,
Sophie*

MARCH

- 1st - St David's Day
- 4th - Mardi Gras (Shrove Tuesday / Pancake Day)*
- 5th - Ash Wednesday
- 6th - World Book Day
- 8th - International Women's Day
- 14th - Pi Day
- 17th - St Patrick's Day
- 20th - Spring Equinox
- 21st - Red Nose Day
- 29th - Earth Hour
- 30th - Mother's Day
- 30th - British Summer Time Begins
- 31st - Eid al-Fitr*

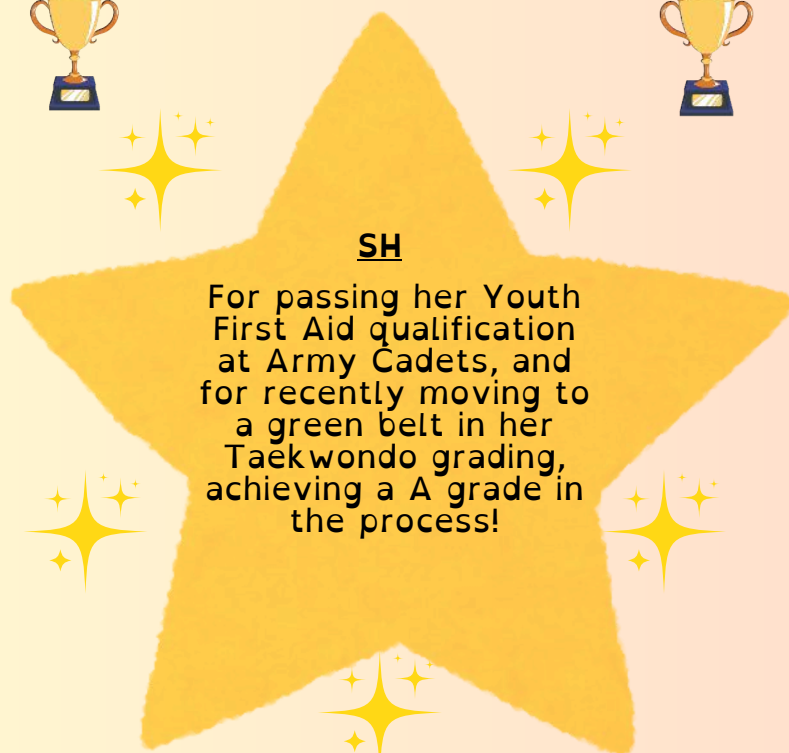
Pancake Day marks the start of Lent. "Mardi Gras" means "Fat Tuesday" in French, a day for indulging in rich foods like pancakes before Lent begins. For many Christians, Lent is a time of sacrifice and reflection. Mardi Gras is the final day of feasting, often celebrated with carnivals.



Eid al-Fitr, meaning 'festival of the breaking of the fast,' is one of the biggest celebrations in the Islamic calendar and marks the end of Ramadan, a month of fasting from dawn to sunset. Fasting helps Muslims focus on their faith and grow closer to Allah. The date of Eid is determined by the Moon's cycle.



Star of the month



SH

For passing her Youth First Aid qualification at Army Cadets, and for recently moving to a green belt in her Taekwondo grading, achieving a A grade in the process!

Runner-up:

WU for his ongoing commitment and dedication to his football training and matches each weekend!

Well done SH and WU!

Children and carers please keep your nominations coming!

We send each winner a certificate and a medal and all runners up receive a certificate too, we want to hear from you if you have something to shout about.



Foster Carer and Children's News



Congratulations to Emma and Lee, our newly approved foster carers! A big thank you for persevering with the application process, and to their SSW Lianne and Carer Recruitment Officer Tracy for being so supportive throughout. We hope you enjoy your journey with us!

The Office's Agency Takeover Day was a great success! The children learned about the staff's behind the scenes efforts to keep them safe. They organised and ordered themselves Domino's pizza, matched children to suitable foster carer households, handled a mock out-of-hours call, assigned staff to their roles, and tidied a desk using one hand. It was a day filled with teamwork, responsibility, and problem-solving, highlighting the children's impressive skills.



Contact Information

Please find below the contact information for the office and for when you need to contact out of hours.



Office Number for 9am-5pm:
01962 715511



Out of Hours (5pm-9am weekends/bank holidays):

For out-of-hours support, please dial the office number, and you will be automatically transferred to the Supervising Social Worker on Duty.



Carer Payments: For any payment enquiries please contact our carer payments team on 01204522667 or carerpaymentsteam@nfa.co.uk

Shine: For any queries on accessing your Shine or Charms accounts or if you are struggling to access your online training, dial the office number during office hours.

Staff Updates



A bittersweet goodbye for Emma, the team manager that left last month. Everybody brought their own food for a lovely buffet and we shared some memories together.

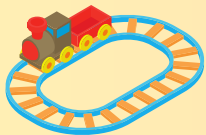


Congratulations to Lianne, who has taken on a new role as Advanced Practitioner! Lianne will be supporting Sophie and Sally with their managerial duties as well as continuing to support families as their supervising social worker.

Important changes to Shine logs



If you log on to Shine using a saved link on your internet browser, this won't work after 14th February. You will need to replace it with <https://nfg.kallidus-suite.com/external>. When you open Shine, the log in screen will look slightly different. Please use the "Log in using password" button. Your username and password will stay the same. If you use Charms to log into Shine (via the 'External Links' section on Charms), you do not need to do anything as we will update the link for you.



Charity Toy Drive

Do you or your family have any toys or books for under 5's that you no longer use?



We are looking to collect toy donations for Woodley Pre-School in Romsey, a local charity-run preschool attended by children close to our hearts. Please bring any toys, books, crafts or puzzles to your next support group, hand them to your SSW, or drop them into the office.

Thank you!



Spotlight on: Sally

Each month, we will shine the spotlight on a different member of staff, and ask them a bunch of questions so you can get to know us better. This month we are shining it on Sally!



1. What's your name?

Sally but many people call me Sal

2. What's your job role and what do you do on daily bases?

I am a Team manager. I work with other professionals who are involved in the lives of all of our children to try to ensure that children can enjoy their best lives and reach their full potential. I provide day-to-day supervision, support and oversight to some of our staff

3. If you could have any superpower, what would it be and why?

I would love to be magic – I could use my spells to make people happier, help me do household jobs, I could use magic to teleport myself to different places

4. What's your favourite type of ice cream, and why is it the best?

Ice-cream is not a favourite of mine but I do love a mango Sorbet

5. If you could be any animal for a day, which one would you pick?

I would like to be dolphin – dolphins live for a long time, they don't have hair (so no bad hair days), they are intelligent and they show empathy



6. What was your favourite toy or game when you were a kid?

My favourite times were when I played on my bike or my roller skates



7. If you could only eat one food for the rest of your life, what would it be?

I love sweet tomatoes and can eat bags of them with a little salt

8. If you could give one piece of advice to your younger self, what would it be?

Life is short, try to enjoy every moment and don't waste your time on regrets, anger, worries and grudges. Take every experience that is offered to you so that you can continue to learn as if you were to live forever

If there are any questions you would like to add, please let us know at adminsouth@fosteringsolutions.com.

****British Exploring Society - NEW Opportunities!****

British Exploring Society have recently released the details of 3 new exciting adventure programmes, which are available to young people from 14 to 19 years of age:

1. Adventure Weekend (camping)

When? Friday 11 April – Sunday 13

April 2025 (2 days and 2 nights)

Where? Cannock Chase,

Staffordshire

Age Range? 14 – 19

Meeting Point: Stoke Train Station

Fundraising Challenge? £20



2. Adventure Week (wild camping)

When? Saturday 24 May –

Wednesday 28 May 2025 (5 days
and 4 nights)

Where? Dartmoor National Park,
Devon

Age Range? 16 – 19

Meeting Point: Plymouth Train
Station

Fundraising Challenge? £35



3. Adventure Week (wild camping)

When? Monday 28 July – Fri 1 August
2025 (5 days and 4 nights)

Where? Cairngorms National Park,
Scotland

Age Range? 16 – 19

Meeting Point: Edinburgh Train
Station

Fundraising Challenge? £35

If you have a young person who would be interested, please let your Supervising Social Worker know or email us at:

adminsouth@fosteringsolutions.com

All kit and train travel to the meeting point is provided

Safeguarding: Your Words Matter

The words we use with children have a lasting impact, especially when it comes to their emotional and psychological safety. Language can shape their sense of worth, trust, and security. By using kind, respectful, and encouraging words, we help create an environment where children feel safe to express themselves. Remember, words can heal or harm, and choosing them thoughtfully is key to supporting a child's wellbeing and safeguarding their future.

INSTEAD OF...	TRY
 Be quiet.	Can you use a softer voice?
 What a mess!	It looks like you had fun! How can we clean up?
 Do you need help?	I'm here to help if you need me.
 I explained how to do this yesterday.	Maybe I can show you another way.
 Do I need to separate you?	Could you use a break?
 Stop crying.	It's okay to cry.
 Do you have any questions?	What questions do you have?
 You're OK.	How are you feeling?
 It's not that hard.	You can do hard things.
 We don't talk like that.	Please use kind words. WE ARE TEACHERS



Check out this poster from We Are Teachers for some examples of better language!

www.weareteachers.com

Guest Speaker Event



LIVE

'PLACEMENT' INSTABILITY LIVED EXPERIENCE LENS

with **Ashleigh Searle**
Lived Experience Leader

Virtual via Zoom

Thursday 20th March 2025
@ 3:30-5 pm

Log in to your **SHINE** account to access this session.

The CareLeaders Online

Children & Young People Now Awards 2023
Winner

Month: Mar 20, 2025, 15:30 – 17:00

Speaker: Ashleigh Searle

Session Title: Placement Instability Lived Experience Lens

Session Highlights:

- ★ **Understanding Placement Instability:** Explore the national context of the rising number of home moves for children in care and the human impact behind these statistics.
- 💛 **Lived Experience Insight:** Learn directly from lived experience to understand the profound effects of multiple home moves on children and young people.
- 🔧 **Best Practice Development:** Discover strategies for creating stable, loving, and well-matched homes that enable children and young people to thrive.
- 💬 **Interactive Discussions:** Engage in meaningful discussions and collaborative activities that enhance your understanding of placement stability and its importance in social work practice.

Learning Outcomes:

- 💡 **National Context:** Understand the current landscape for children and young people experiencing multiple moves and the implications of these transitions.
- ⚙️ **Humanising Statistics:** Learn to empathise with the lived experiences behind the numbers, bringing a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by young people in care.
- 🔧 **Stability Strategies:** Develop best practice approaches for fostering stability and reducing the number of home moves, ensuring children have the loving homes they deserve.
- 🎯 **Actionable Insights:** Gain practical tips and resources that you can implement in your practice to support children in care.
- 💛 **Advocacy for Change:** Appreciate the importance of collaboration and advocacy for improving the lives of children and young people facing placement instability.



The Role of Reading for Children Experiencing Vulnerability

Recent research from BOOKTRUST outlines why reading is important for children from vulnerable backgrounds. A summary of the research is provided below, but please visit <https://www.booktrust.org.uk/what-we-do/impact-and-research/Research/the-benefits-of-reading/> for the full pdf.

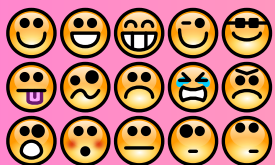
Reading has the potential to support strong foundations for the happiness and future success of children from vulnerable backgrounds. Research shows that reading and sharing stories supports bonding, stability, identity, wellbeing, social and emotional growth and attainment.



Children's brains experience most growth in their early years, so much so that an enriching environment during this period can have an impact on a child up to four decades later. Development of the parts of the brain responsible for language, emotion and cognition are supported by early attachment experiences when a child receives positive care giving. But these formative experiences may be disrupted when children experience vulnerability. Wider evidence shows reading in early childhood is associated with beneficial outcomes for cognition, mental health, and brain structure later in life.

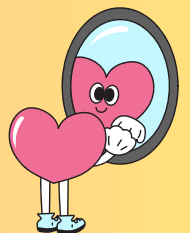


Reading together brings both immediate and longer-term benefits to children experiencing vulnerability and their parents and carers. It provides a way for parents and carers to initiate the kind of nurturing interactions that enhance attunement and attachment. Reading together improves the bond between the parent or carer and child, and makes children feel secure and loved. A regular and predictable reading routine provides a sense of security, which is particularly important for children from vulnerable backgrounds.



A reading routine can also help children regulate and connect with their emotions and nurtures the skills they need to connect with others. Reading provides the opportunity for calm through escapism, imagination and emotional regulation. In many ways reading can act as a protective factor against the adversity some children experience.

Books can also strengthen belonging and identity through stories that reflect children's lives and the lives of those around them. Representative books allow children to explore aspects of their own lives that they may not have seen accurately or positively represented before, supporting self-identity.



BookTrust are running Letterbox Club, a programme that aims to inspire a love of reading and engagement with numeracy in children from vulnerable backgrounds. There are several features designed into Letterbox Club which are key to engaging children in reading. Regular parcels, with books, maths games and stationery build anticipation and provide novelty and reinforcement. Receiving a parcel in the post with their name on it helps children feel held and remembered. All of which contribute to children feeling engaged and excited about the parcels, supporting reading motivation. The books are selected carefully so that they are suitable for the child's development stage and relatable to their interests.

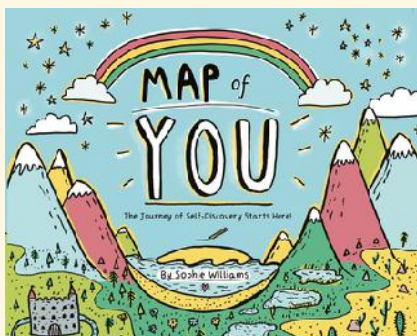
March is also the month that holds World Book Day (6th March) - you can visit www.worldbookday.com/books-and-tokens/book-token/digital-tokens/ to download a digital token that can be exchanged for a free book! Check out March's children's newsletter for some recommendations by age range.

Recommendations



Book Recommendation

Map of You - Sophie Williams



A thoughtfully designed and timely activity book in which to explore ideas of mindfulness and self-acceptance by emerging author-illustrator, Sophie Williams.

The journey of self-discovery starts right here!

Aimed at 6 to 12 year olds, this delightful activity book asks young readers to explore the landscape of their own psyche. They are invited to visit their mountains of strength and wetlands of weaknesses, to confront their 'forests of fears', and to take comfort in their 'islands of interests'. Personality quizzes, colouring in, drawing and designing all feature. Self-examination has never been more enjoyable!

At a time when the mental health of young people is a point of concern, this activity book offers a much-needed opening to ideas of self-awareness, empathy, well-being and mindfulness, with a refreshing optimism and lightness of touch.

Website Recommendation



www.worldbookday.com



Celebrate World Book Day by visiting their website, full of free downloadable booklets, activity sheets, and book recommendations.

You'll also find exclusive offers, exciting competitions, event details, and helpful resources for parents/carers to inspire a love of reading.

Also check out their 2024 impact report to see how last year's campaign made a difference.

Film Recommendation



The Swimmers (Netflix)



From war-torn Syria to the 2016 Rio Olympics, two young sisters embark on a harrowing journey as refugees, putting both their hearts and champion swimming skills to heroic use.

Sisters Yusra and Sarah Mardini fled their home country of Syria in 2015 when their house was destroyed by the civil war. They arranged to be smuggled into Greece on a dinghy. However, the refugees were in the middle of the Aegean Sea when the engine cut out and the pair were responsible for saving the lives of those on board. Just a year later, Yusra competed in two swimming events at the Rio Olympics as part of the Refugee Olympic team. The Swimmers is a biographical drama that both illuminates the refugee experience and shows a young athlete's determination to succeed against all odds.

App Recommendation



Be My Eyes

Be My Eyes is a game-changer for people with visual impairments.

Users can also join as sighted volunteers, where they'll be connected with visually impaired individuals via live video call. Volunteers can offer real-time assistance with tasks like reading labels, navigating spaces, or identifying objects. The app fosters a sense of community and support, helping people gain independence and confidence in their daily lives.

Podcast Recommendation



Voices of Fostering - National Fostering Group



For the past two years, NFG have been recording our Voices of Fostering podcast, bringing to life the stories of our carers, families, and staff.

You can explore all episodes by searching Voices of Fostering on your favourite streaming platform. An episode is released every Wednesday!

Recent episodes:

- Travis - Moving from the Corporate world to Fostering
- Hannah - Understanding Educational Support in Fostering
- Khaira - Growing Up in a Fostering Family

If you have any book, Tv, film or activity recommendations then do please let us know as adminsouth@fosteringsolutions.com, and we can include it in the next newsletter.

Support Groups - March 2025

Support groups are a great chance to be able to chat to other Foster Carers in your area and discuss ideas, support you may need, or ask questions you may have with your Supervising Social Worker.

Casey will be attending support groups and we look forward to seeing you there!



Fareham & Gosport with Charisse

12th March 10am
Bayside Cabin, Stokes
Bay Road, Gosport

Gloucestershire with sister agency

19th March 12pm
Thames Head Inn,
Tetbury Road

Southampton with Lianne

13th March 11am
Empress of Blandings,
Copythorne

Chichester with Lucy

28th March 10am
The Harvester, Barnfield
Drive, Chichester

Basingstoke with Michelle

21st March 12pm
The Spruce Goose
Basingstoke

Swindon with Fenella

11th March
Contact Fenella for
more details



Recommend Us!

People that you refer to us often go on to become foster carers. We want to acknowledge the contribution you make to growing our family of carers and the 'Recommend Us' scheme aims to do just that.

Once the person you have recommended has been approved at panel, you will receive a loyalty payment of £1500* on your next appropriate allowance date. You will also receive a Love2Shop voucher just for getting us in touch with someone.

*Speak to our Carer Recruitment Officer,
Tracy, for more details:
Tracy.Wilding@fosteringsolutions.com

Here is some feedback from one of our Foster Carers. Thank you so much, it means a lot.

'The agency has been amazing, yet again this year. Our social worker is always available or calls back and is a constant source of information. Everyone we come in to contact with is always enormously helpful and encouraging.'

Youth Council

In Youth Council, children meet other people who are in care, and share their experiences with each other. They can give their views on different topics and we will make sure their ideas come to life.

We welcome foster children and birth children and send all new members a welcome pack!



If you have a child/young person (any age considered) who would like to join us then please get in touch with Casey. The next meeting will be on Teams in March from 4-5pm. The links will be sent out soon.

Welcome packs have been sent out to the young people on board! Here is a photo of one of the packs we have sent (they include a welcome letter, lanyard with card, pen, keyring, notebook and some sweets).



What do you think of our newsletters?

We would love to hear your honest thoughts on this newsletter. If there's anything you'd like to see that's not on here, email us on adminsouth@fosteringsolutions.com, or alternatively fill in our anonymous survey by following this link:

<https://forms.office.com/e/ygY4xxtESB>

Fostering Solutions Afternoon Tea

Thank you for opening your hearts and your homes.
We invite you for afternoon tea to celebrate all that you do.

RSVP!

adminsouth@fosteringsolutions.com

When? Thursday 27th March
11:30am-1:30pm

Where? Otterbourne Office,
Poles Copse, Poles Lane
SO21 2DZ

For foster carers only - no children