



BUILDING INCREDIBLE  
**FUTURES**  
TOGETHER AND FOREVER



# **National Fostering Group**

**Quality and Impact Report**  
January 2020 – December 2020



Small Steps, Big Outcomes

ofg OUTCOMESFIRST GROUP

OUR PLEDGE TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE, WE WILL:

1 KEEP YOU SAFE AND CARE WELL FOR YOU

- Ensure you live in a safe and homely place
- Listen to you, particularly when you raise concerns about your safety or the quality of your care
- Ensure that those people who care for you are trained and supported to keep you safe
- Make sure you are prepared for the next stage of your life – including managing money, looking after your health and taking care of where you live

2 HELP YOU GET A GOOD EDUCATION (ACHIEVE AND ENJOY)

- Make sure your education meets your needs
- Help you to attend your education provision and make good progress
- Have high expectations for your potential
- Celebrate your educational achievements
- Help those who care for you have the right advice to support your education

3 HELP YOU BE HEALTHY AND ENJOY LIFE

- Help you to be physically and emotionally well
- Support you to take part in clubs and/or hobbies that interest you
- Support you to make healthy eating decisions and to cook healthy food
- Help you to socialise with your friends (as long as this is safe)
- Support you to take part in exercise and have fun

4 SUPPORT YOUR FUTURE AND YOUR NEXT ADVENTURE

- Help you to take part in positive activities
- Support you to undertake work experience
- Help you to find employment, an apprenticeship or to study further
- Support you to take part in an adventure when you reach sixteen

CONTENTS

Pledge to Children, Young People and Adults	2
Introduction from our Chief Executive	4 - 5
National Fostering Group – Delivering Outcomes for Children	6
Commitment to Quality – Group Quality Director	7
Youth Voice	8 - 9
Group Outcomes Team	10 - 11
Careers and Employability Support	12
Partnership with British Exploring Society	13
The Duke of Edinburgh's Award	14 - 15
Education Attainment – Fostering	16 - 17
Case Studies – Fostering Services	18 - 19
Education Attainment – Schools	20 - 21
Case Studies – Education Services	22 - 23
Acorn Digital Learning – our online school	24
Options Autism Adults introduce the San Martin Scale	25
Case Study – Adult Services	26
Reducing Restrictive Practice	27
Our Therapeutic Approach	28 - 30
Inspection Outcomes – Education Services	30
Inspection Outcomes – Fostering Services	31 - 35
Inspection Outcomes – Children's Residential	36
Inspection Outcomes – Adult Services	37
Writing Competition Winner – Born Wrong	38 - 41
Caring Through the Pandemic	42
Spreading Creativity, Not Germs	43
Corona Rap – a Poem by Joshua	44 - 45
We are a Great Place to Work	46
Our Priorities for 2021	47
Outcomes First Group – Our Vision, Our Mission, Our Values	

National Fostering Group



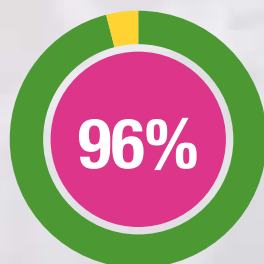
# PROUD TO BE SERVING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

**W**elcome to our annual quality and impact report. It has been a tremendous year in many ways, despite the challenges of COVID-19. We have continued to grow our capacity by opening new homes, new schools and welcoming other new services to our family and by doing so we've been able to deliver high quality education and well-being to many more vulnerable children and adults. As we grow in scale, we have the privilege to influence more lives and I am very pleased to be able to demonstrate the impact of our work to improve outcomes in 2020.

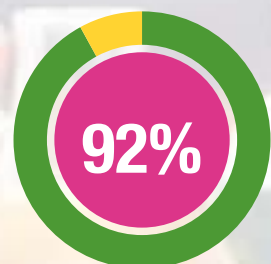
## BY DECEMBER 2020 ACROSS ALL OUR UK SERVICES:



100% of our Independent Fostering Agencies were judged to be good or better



96% of our adult homes were judged to be good or outstanding by the Care Quality Commission



92% of our schools were judged to be good or better

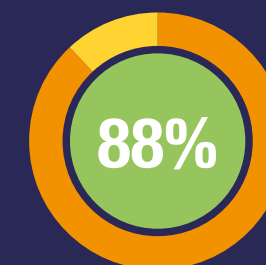


## OUTCOMES FIRST GROUP

WE ARE OFSTED'S  
HIGHEST  
PERFORMING  
LARGE PROVIDER



100% of our English Fostering Agencies were good or outstanding, compared to only 92% nationally



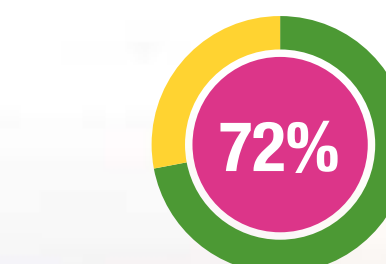
88% of our stand-alone children's homes were good or outstanding, compared to only 80% nationally



22% of our stand-alone children's homes were outstanding (sector average 15%)

I am absolutely delighted to share that in August 2020, Ofsted reported that Outcomes First Group was the highest performing large provider of children's services in England (top five providers by scale). Every one of our fostering agencies are good or outstanding compared to 92% nationally, whilst in our children's homes, 22% are outstanding, considerably outperforming the sector average of 15%.

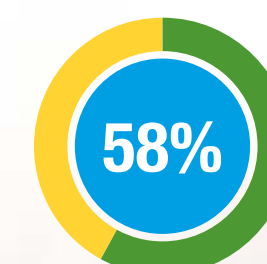
In this report, we have included extracts from all the inspections that took place pre-lockdown, plus Ofsted's assurance visits to children's homes in England which took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the regulator has not made judgements during the assurance visits, we have been delighted by the progress made and the regulator's reports reflect the further improvements our staff have made in these services over the last twelve months. We look forward to the return of full inspections as soon as possible so that we can further evidence the impact of our work to deliver great outcomes for children and young people. However, it is worth noting that by the end of 2020, 88% of our stand alone children's homes in England were considered to be good or outstanding, compared to only 80% nationally. Despite the challenges 2020 has posed for us all, this has clearly been a good year and these results are testament to the hard work of our teams.



72% of children and young people have been in the same children's home with us for over 12 months.

Despite COVID-19 we continued to operate all of our schools and maintained good levels of attendance. We also provided high quality online education through Acorn Digital Learning when pupils could not attend school – see Page 20 - 21. I hope that you enjoy reading some of the great stories about what children and young people did with their foster parents, teachers and keyworkers during lockdown 2020.

In last year's report we said we would do a number of additional things to further improve quality in 2020, including appointing outcomes leads for both adventures and employability, providing more opportunities for young people to take part in expeditions, introduce the Duke of Edinburgh's Award into every service, roll-out therapeutic parenting and well-being hubs, and expand the range of performance measures we use to demonstrate the impact of our services. I am delighted that we are able to report on all of these in this annual report and in particular



58% of children and young people have been in the same fostering placement for over 12 months

the introduction of Placement Stability Measures. We know that if children have a stable home they are more likely to succeed in life and we are therefore absolutely focussed on supporting our staff and foster parents to support children well.

Some of what affects children and young people staying in one of our services is out of our control, however, we will continue to use the information we get from the stability index to improve stability for our children and young people, and in turn improve their life chances.

As I said last year, we have some great plans for 2021 and I look forward to sharing these in twelve months' time.

**David Leatherbarrow**  
Chief Executive





# NATIONAL FOSTERING GROUP

## DELIVERING OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN

**T**he last twelve months have been a challenge by any measure. However, I am pleased to report that the Foster Carers and Staff at the National Fostering Group rose to that challenge magnificently, providing support, love and care to over 5,000 children.

I have spoken to a number of carers who have even used lockdown to create an opportunity to provide stability and improved educational outcomes for their foster children. When we look back at the last year, we will reflect that despite the hardship, we have learned a lot about fostering, and how families benefit from time together without outside interruption.

I am also very conscious that we have tragically lost a small number of our carers to Covid 19, and in addition, many of our colleagues and carers have lost loved ones to the pandemic. The legacy that our carers have created by improving the life chances of large numbers of children will impact those young lives and the world for years to come. However, we will miss them all terribly, and our thoughts and prayers are with the families and friends of those we have lost.

**The progress of the group has not missed a beat over the last year, and this report demonstrates that. We have:**

- Rolled out therapeutic parenting training
- Further utilised our Youth Voice tool
- Developed our online school and educational support for children
- Developed our support for young people 18+ to help them into work or further education
- Launched our partnership with Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme
- Once again, our young people delivered improved exam results
- Once again, been formally certified as a Great Place to Work



I am very grateful in my role, that I lead a team of colleagues who are so passionate about delivering outcomes for children. This report is full of examples where a child has benefitted from being placed within our group. They have then taken some of the opportunities being presented to them, and used that as a springboard for future success. As a part of Outcomes First Group, we have the scale to support children in many ways that they deserve. However, none of this would be possible without our incredible carers and our colleagues, who wake up every morning with a desire to change the lives of children.

I hope you enjoy reading this report, and whether you are a carer, colleague, local authority customer, or supporter of Outcomes First Group, you again feel proud of what you have done to deliver outcomes for children.



**STEVE CHRISTIE**  
Managing Director  
Fostering

“The legacy that our carers have created by improving the life chances of large numbers of children will impact those young lives and the world for years to come”

# CONTINUING OUR COMMITMENT

## TO EXCELLENT QUALITY

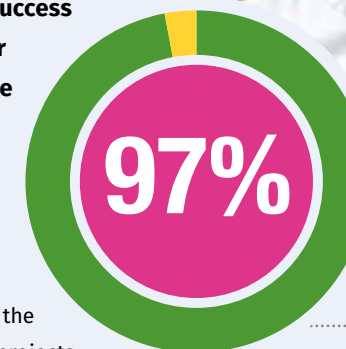
**A**s I have said many times before, the difference between a good service and a great service is the difference we make to the lives of children, young people and adults. That is why here at Outcomes First Group, we are absolutely focussed on improving outcomes and improving life chances for those we care for or educate. I hope that you enjoy reading some of the success stories of 2020 for our children, young people and adults.

Our pledge to children and young people, as set out here, underpins everything we do, and is the focus of so many of our projects aimed at improving the lives of those we are trusted to care for and to educate. I am also pleased to report the roll out of the new pledge to adults in our care, which takes into account the unique support our adults need.

In this year's report I am very pleased to share with you our ongoing work to develop the Youth Voice Tool – which was, in part, designed by young people to demonstrate how we are delivering on our pledge. This amazing tool was developed in-house and during COVID-19 it became one of the tools our keyworkers used to facilitate open dialogue with the young people for whom we care – often via virtual means. I am delighted by the success of this project at a number of levels, not least because it helps to demonstrate the progress that individual children and young people have made. I hope you like seeing a real example of the tool in our report this year – see **Page 8 – 9**.



**MIKE BLAKEY**  
Group Director of Quality



**97% of children and young people have access to high quality services**

For me, education and well-being go hand-in-hand at all ages. If we support children, young people and adults well, keep them safe, and help to ensure that they have a stable home then they are more likely to achieve success in life. This year, despite COVID-19, children in our foster care and our schools attained well and the impact of their hard work was borne out in the examination results as included in this report. I would like to personally congratulate each and every young person on their achievements and their foster parents, teachers and support workers for helping them to success.

I often tell people that I joined Outcomes First Group because I was driven by the scale of the organisation and therefore the impact we could have on so many more lives. I am pleased that we have continued to grow

throughout 2020 because our scale allows us to do even more and, as one of the largest independent providers in the UK, we have a unique opportunity to influence the public and private sectors. It is my expectation that, as we grow and continuously improve, others will seek to follow us and we will generate healthy competition in the wider sector, one in which we all seek to deliver the very best services in the UK. I am therefore pleased that we are reporting on the roll out of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Therapeutic Parenting, and many more new initiatives designed to help improve lives.

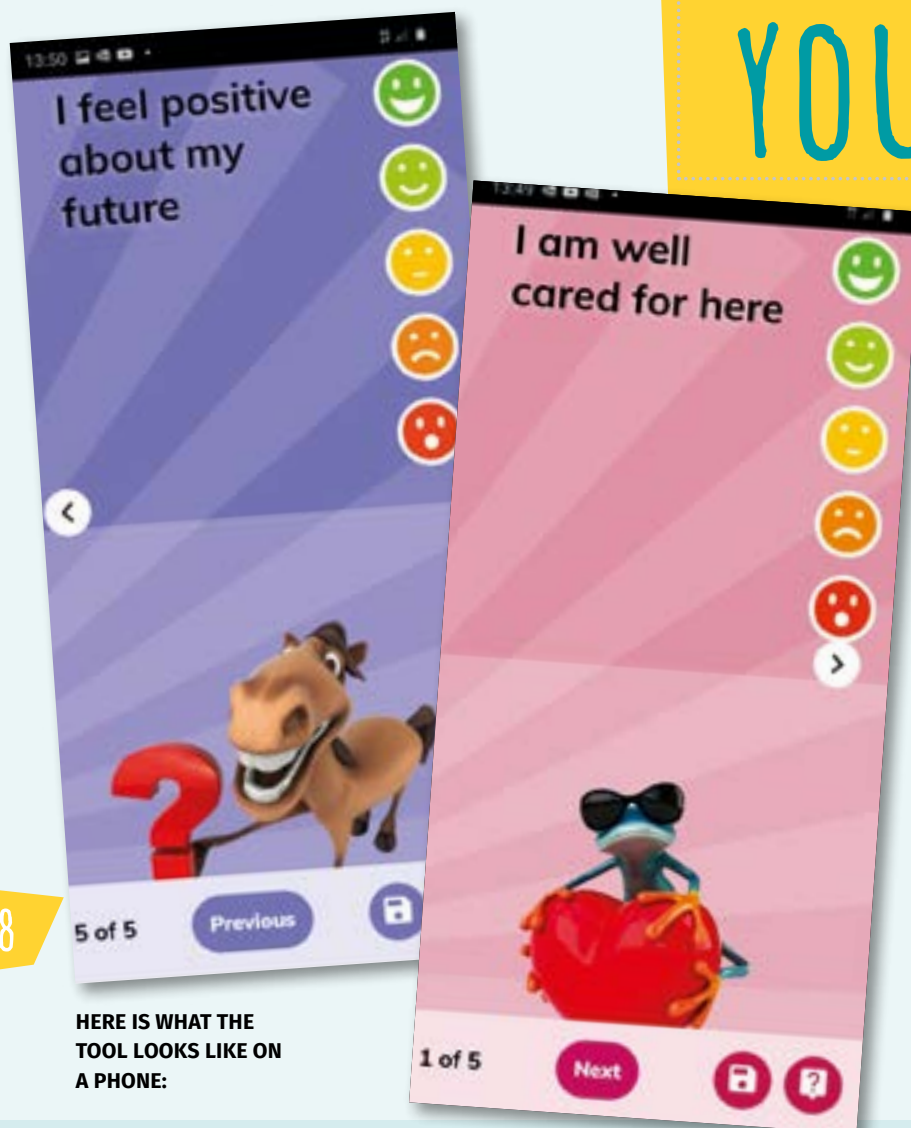
By the end of 2020, we were operating 30 independent fostering agencies, 45 schools including an online school, 16 residential special schools with children's homes, 81 stand-alone children's homes, 25 adult services (some of which are yet to be inspected) and an adult college. This year we welcomed Next Steps, Safe Houses, Ryan Care, Bryn Melyn Care and Enhanced Children's Services to the Outcomes First family.

By the end of the year we were delivering care or education to 6,700 young people and 170 adults and I am really pleased to announce that, for a second year in a row, 97% of the children, young people and adults in our care or education were accessing high quality services as judged by a regulator. This is no mean feat and again I would like to congratulate our front line staff.

Finally, as the Director of Quality, I am never quite satisfied and always look to what more we can do, so I hope that you enjoy reading about our priorities for 2021 – the things that we will do next to continuously drive improvements across the Group.



# YOUTH VOICE ONLINE TOOL



HERE IS WHAT THE TOOL LOOKS LIKE ON A PHONE:

During 2019 we introduced our new online Youth Voice tool, designed by children and young people from our services, and in last year's report we were able to tell you what the tool had revealed about their feelings. The tool allows a child or young person to talk through a series of statements linked to the four areas of our pledge and rate how they feel. It encourages good quality conversations with their keyworkers and helps to build secure attachments with key adults for a child or young person. When used again with a child or young person, the reports produced become a simple, yet effective, distance-travelled tool, and can be used in various ways to support a child or young person, their foster parents or the stability of their placement, whether that be in one of our schools or in their home, even both!



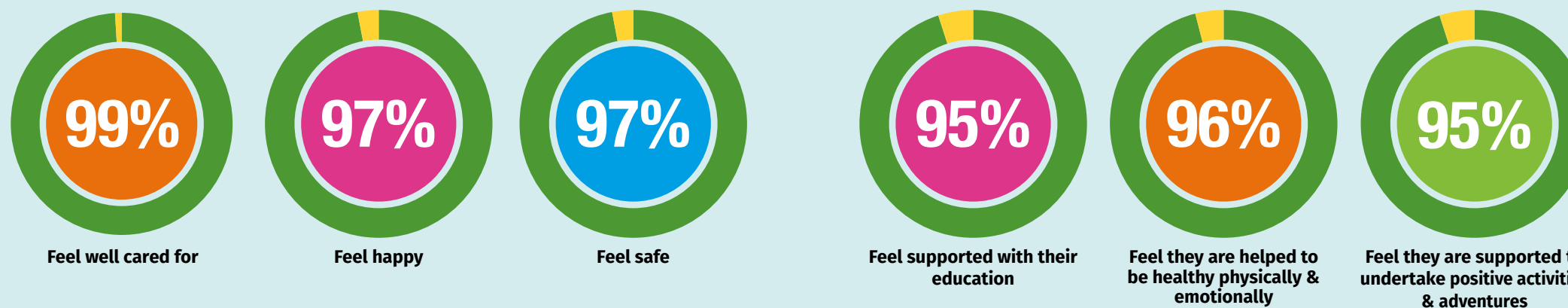
## HERE ARE SOME OF THE WAYS WE HAVE USED IT IN 2020:

- With the child or young person to track the difference in their feelings over time – they love the colourful, easily accessible reports!
- In any meeting which is designed to support the child or young person, to demonstrate their views: Local Authority Annual Reviews, Personal Education Plan meetings, Professionals' meetings, School meetings etc.
- With foster parents, parents and other professionals to identify and celebrate progress
- To identify areas of concern and to plan appropriate actions in support of change
- In foster parent supervisions and annual reviews to secure the voice of the child or young person
- For intervention work to measure the impact
- Services are able to use their data to look at opportunities to improve their offer



## LISTENING TO THE VOICE OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Here is a summary of what our children and young people have told us during 2020:



Four out of five children feel positive about the future



Four out of five children feel they are being helped with their next steps



Nine out of ten children feel they are able to embrace new opportunities

With the pandemic changing our lives dramatically this year, the Youth Voice tool became a way of our social workers connecting with children and young people online, allowing them the chance to open up through the statements, and discuss how they were feeling, even though they were not able to visit them at home. As the national crisis continued through the summer of 2020 and social workers were able to visit homes again, it became a useful way of re-establishing relationships and looking at the impact of lockdown and school closures on our children and young people.



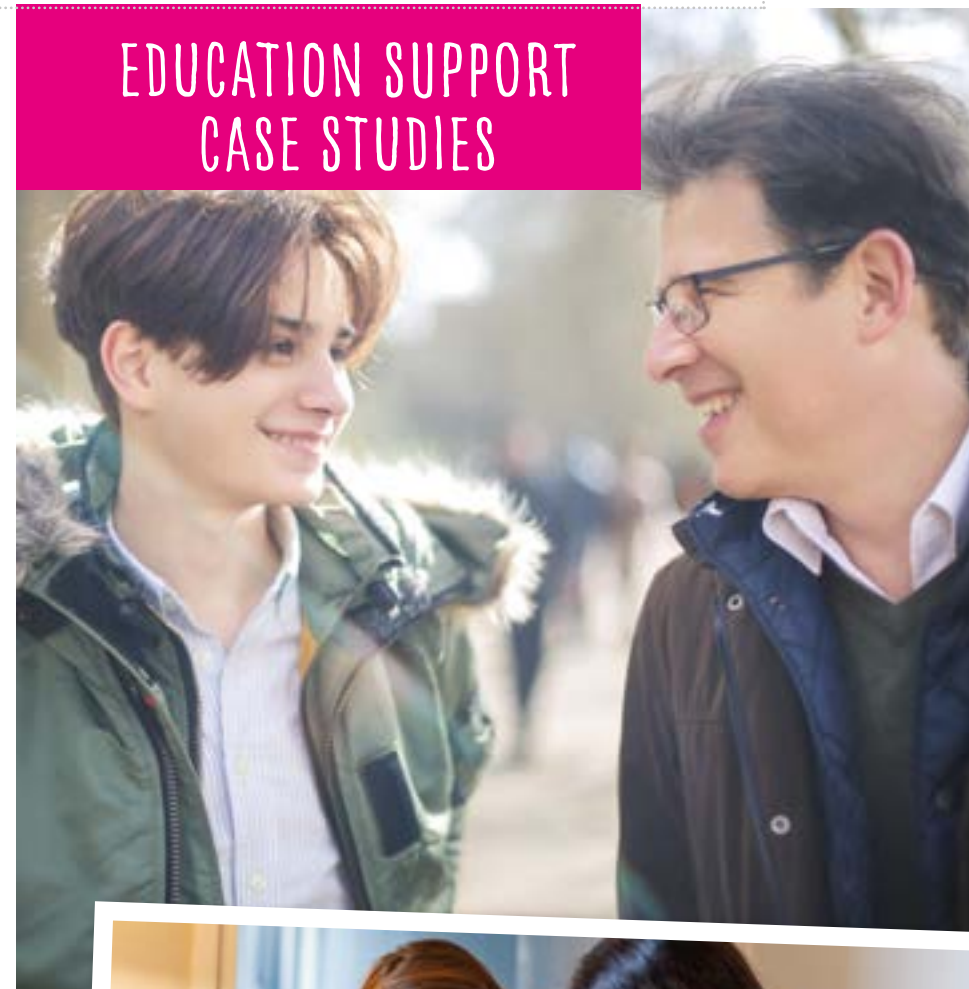
## THE GROUP OUTCOMES TEAM

**W**e all know that children and young people in care are less likely to achieve well at school, suffer from mental health issues, enter the criminal justice system or, as an adult, other social care systems. At Outcomes First Group, we are working hard to change this bleak picture on an individual basis for our children, young people and adults, and have a dedicated team to help boost and improve outcomes. Colleagues from anywhere in the group, along with foster parents, can access these additional resources at any point, and the support offered aligns with both of our pledges.

# DELIVERING ON OUR PLEDGE



## EDUCATION SUPPORT CASE STUDIES



### CASE STUDY

#### THE EDUCATION AND SEND LEAD REPORTS

A young man in foster care was really struggling to follow school rules since the full reopening of his school in September, and the school were suggesting he may only be able to attend part time. Exploring his current provision highlighted that he was only receiving half of the support due through his Education, Health and Care Plan. This was down to the impact COVID-19 had on the staffing in his school and an unavoidable consequence of the situation. Being sympathetic to schools in these challenging times, I provided the member of staff with some ideas to suggest to the school, to try and support the young man in improving his behaviour. As one trigger point was lesson change over time, the suggestion was put to the school, that he left his lesson five minutes early to get to his next lesson, whilst the corridors were empty. This was a simple change, which did not affect the staffing in school, but provided the young man with the opportunity to get from lesson to lesson without getting into conflict with other students. His behaviour, although still not perfect, has significantly improved. I am working with all involved to ensure a swift return to his full provision once safety measures for educational settings are relaxed.

Turn to the next pages to find out how these leads are supporting our children, young people and adults with their futures and opportunities for adventure. →

### HELP YOU GET A GOOD EDUCATION (ACHIEVE AND ENJOY)

#### Education and SEND Lead

The Education and SEND Lead can support with any education enquiry, big or small, from a simple question which needs answering, to playing an active role in a case where a member of staff or a foster parent has not managed to get a suitable or appropriate educational outcome for their child or young person. This service can help with advice on where to go next

with an enquiry or question, or at a more serious level, can start to take an active role, including any escalation on behalf of the service, foster parent, child or young person. This work is always sensitively undertaken with stakeholders, with the needs of the child and young person, and a sense of what the desired outcome should be at the heart of the support delivered.

### SUPPORT YOUR FUTURE AND YOUR NEXT ADVENTURE

#### Careers and Employability Lead

The Careers and Employability Lead can support with any careers, employability or employment enquiry, with the purpose of boosting the future chances of our young people. This service can provide high-level support to staff and foster parents in trying to find appropriate further opportunities for our young people, but can also provide 1:1 careers advice and guidance where necessary. This is particularly important if:

- A young person is not currently in an educational setting;
- A young person's current educational setting has not provided careers support at a suitable or appropriate level;
- If opportunities for this support were missed by the young person.

### SUPPORT YOUR FUTURE AND YOUR NEXT ADVENTURE

#### Adventures and Activities Lead

Responsible for the two key partnerships with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and British Exploring Society, the Adventures and Activities Lead delivers the opportunity for our young people to complete a DofE Award at the three levels of Bronze, Silver or Gold, or to join an expedition adventure with British Exploring Society.

These opportunities allow young people to acquire essential personal skills, and connect them with their communities and the great outdoors in a developmental and positive manner. These activities support and boost the other areas of 'Help me get a good education' and 'Support my future'.

### CASE STUDY

In a recent case, the Education and SEND Lead has been providing support to a foster family and young person, by exploring with professionals involved, the reasons that the young person was only being offered one day a week in a

specialist college. With the Education Lead's involvement, it was determined that the issue was not with the college not willing to increase the time the young person was attending, but because there was a delay from the local authority confirming that they would fund the college place. The

Education Lead was able to approach the right people in the Local Authority SEND department for support, identify where the issue was, and encourage the case along. The result being that the young person is now in college two days a week, with the plan being to increase this to three days next term.



# CAREERS AND EMPLOYABILITY

## SERVICES 2020

**D**espite the challenges this year has brought, we have continued to develop and strengthen the Careers and Employability services offered to our young people, improving outcomes and exploring exciting future opportunities. From targeted careers advice and events, to relevant communications and support around the change in exam arrangements for GCSE/Post 16 due to COVID-19, here is a little of what we have been up to:

### CAREERS EVENTS

2020 saw the introduction of careers events within our independent fostering agencies. These events are designed to expose young people to the amazing opportunities available in their local area and allow them the opportunity to meet local businesses and hear from professionals about their jobs. Young people at Alliance Foster Care in Northampton and Pathway Care Fostering in Devon were able to access advice and support, in addition to what had been provided by their schools.

“What a fantastic event! We learnt a great deal about Post 16 options for our young person and he was very interested by what he found out. It has made him think more about what he needs to achieve in his GCSEs.”  
Foster Parent

We look forward to re-starting these events once we can deliver them safely face to face.



### APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME

We are proud to work for Outcomes First Group, and even more proud to be able to create opportunities for the future generation with our own apprenticeship programme. Launched in 2019, we have continued to build on our offer of apprenticeship opportunities in our supportive teams such as Central Services, Schools and Fostering Services. Whilst open to any young person eligible for an apprenticeship, we truly believe that we can offer care experienced young people the extra safety net of understanding what their other barriers to employment might be and support them with overcoming them, all with a company that puts their wellbeing at the heart of the offer.

### OUR SCHOOLS

With the appointment of our Group Career and Employability Lead, we are working closer than ever to ensure that all our schools are supported in delivering a fantastic careers service and that schools meet the Gatsby Benchmarks. Our growing network of Careers Leads in schools are able to share good practice and find solutions to their specific challenges in delivering this key area.

### EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

Although we offer great support within our schools, we wanted to be able to extend that support to our amazing parents and foster carers. Earlier this year we formed a partnership with Pathway CTM to enable everyone to be able to access up to date careers information – all from the comfort of their own home. Employability skills online sessions are available to help in many areas, from writing an application form or a personal statement to skills to interview well.

### THE FUTURE

We are always seeking new opportunities to bring the latest services, knowledge and skills to our organisation. Here is a little look at some of the fantastic opportunities we are hoping to bring to 2021:

- **Virtual Work Experience**  
With the increasing restrictions and safety concerns, attending work experience has become increasingly difficult. We are passionate about ensuring our young people continue to receive a sturdy careers program – despite the national pandemic.
- **More Apprenticeship Opportunities**  
We will bring more young people into the organisation and hopefully inspire them for a career with a caring organisation.
- **High aspirations**  
Partnership with CMS Law, an international law firm, to support young people interested in a career in law into fully supported learning opportunities.
- **Qualified Careers Leads**  
Although it is not compulsory for a Careers Lead to hold a qualification within the field, we want to deliver ‘gold standard’ provision to our students. In 2021 we will be able to offer our Careers Leads a Level 6 qualification, making leaps to ensure they have the best knowledge and tools to create fantastic outcomes for their students – watch this space!

■ **For more information or support email:**  
[careers.support@ofgl.co.uk](mailto:careers.support@ofgl.co.uk)

# “WILDESTAN GETS A 10/10 FROM HER”

**L**ast year we shared with you our new partnership with British Exploring Society and during 2019 we had our first explorers take part in programmes with them, some to the Scottish Highlands, some to the Canadian Yukon and even some to the Peruvian Amazon! Our young explorers’ stories, plus the life-changing impact their experiences had on them were shared in last year’s report. One of our young explorers actually went on to win ‘Young Explorer of the Year’ with British Exploring at a celebration evening at the Royal Geographical Society in London, March 2020.



all of these types of experiences. However, lockdown did not deter British Exploring Society from adapting in a way no one could have imagined pre-pandemic.

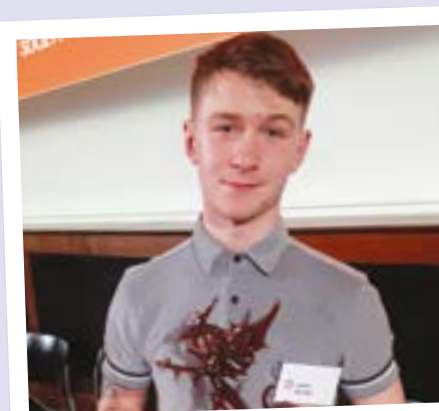
### ADVENTURE STARTS... AT HOME?!

**This is where Wildestan was born.**

Wildestan offers the opportunity to take part in virtual adventures to learn key outdoor survival skills, get helpful tips on kit and equipment, and take part in science as young people explore the ‘wilderness where they stand’. During Wildestan sessions, young people are invited to spend 30-45 minutes with a professional Expedition Leader and experience being on an expedition together with other Wildestan explorers, but all from the comfort of their own home. Young people

are able to decide on their own journey in Wildestan, by registering for as many interactive adventures as they wish. During the sessions, they are transported to their first basecamp to take part in challenges, meet new people, and feel connected to the outdoors. Maybe at some point in the future as British Exploring Society get back to physical expeditions, these young people might want to sign up and use their newly acquired skills in a real life setting.

In partnership with Outcomes First Group, British Exploring offered Wildestan out to all the young people we had already signed up for expeditions during 2020, plus everyone else in the group was offered the opportunity to join, even if they had never considered an expedition something of interest to them. In this way, we were able to open a whole new landscape of opportunities for our young people, some of whom would not have been able to access a physical expedition.



Imagine the plans we had for 2020! Back at the beginning of the year when COVID-19 became a thing we all started talking about, we already had explorers from all over the group confirmed for the first expedition of the year to the Scottish Cairngorms. We were expanding our number of participants by 100% from 2019 and had plans to send explorers on four further expeditions across the year with British Exploring. The pandemic scuppered all our plans for bringing life-changing adventures in the wild to our young people and put a stop to

### HERE ARE JUST SOME OF THE COMMENTS THAT WE RECEIVED ABOUT THIS BRILLIANT NEW INITIATIVE:

“Loving them, she is really, really enjoying them. She is ready to go on time every week. She has learnt a lot and can’t wait for the real adventures to begin again.”

National Fostering  
Agency Foster Parent

“She finds it really difficult to mix in a group setting but she said to me that if she went now and met a big group it wouldn’t be so bad as she knows everyone. I think it has given her a purpose and if you were to ask her, she would say she never would have thought that she would have had this experience.”

Fostering Solutions Foster Parent

We are now looking forward to being able to deliver expeditions to some amazing places again in 2021, and reaching more young people with online experiences.

Find out more about British Exploring Society here: [www.britishexploring.org](http://www.britishexploring.org)



## OUR COMMITMENT TO SUPPORTING OPPORTUNITIES &amp; ADVENTURES

## DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S AWARD

## “ABSOLUTELY SIGN ME UP!”

This is the comment we hear from staff and young people alike when it comes to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, the world's leading achievement award for young people.



With raising aspirations and increasing opportunities firmly at the heart of everything we do, during 2020 we partnered with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award as a National Operating Authority, meaning that every single young person and adult from 14 to the age of 25, in any of our services, has access to the award and this fantastic opportunity for personal development.

## WHAT IS THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S AWARD?

14

HRH the Duke of Edinburgh first considered the idea of a national programme to support young people's development in the autumn of 1954 at the request of his inspiring former headmaster, Kurt Hahn. Since 1954 it has changed, grown and travelled around the world and now has a firm place with us at Outcomes First Group. Any young person can do a Duke of Edinburgh's award, regardless of ability, gender, background or location. Achieving an award is not a competition or about being first; it is all about setting personal challenges and pushing personal boundaries.

There are four sections to complete at Bronze and Silver level, five sections at Gold level. The first three involve helping the community/

environment by going the extra mile, becoming fitter, developing new skills and broadening horizons. The fourth involves planning for, training for and completing an expedition, and at Gold level only, working with a team on a residential activity. The Bronze programme will take a minimum of six months to complete, with subsequent programmes taking less time if you've completed Bronze and Silver.

## THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S AWARD AND OUTCOMES FIRST GROUP

It quickly became apparent that this award scheme was as appealing to our staff as it was our young people. All across the organisation

members of the group with varying backgrounds and job roles have jumped at the chance of being part of this new initiative saying,

“I'd love to help our young people get involved.”

Within its first six months, the award has already grown from strength to strength, with over 140 colleagues coming forward to sign up to become a Duke of Edinburgh Leader for their setting, 71 of our sites are now set up to deliver the initiative, and over 116 young people are already progressing through the first sections of their award.



“Adrian's confidence has really increased since he started scootering for his skills section. He does need support, but is enjoying his Duke of Edinburgh experience with Fostering Solutions.”

Foster Parent, Fostering Solutions, Greater Manchester

“The Duke of Edinburgh's Award has helped me build deeper relationships and have better communication with our young people who are taking part.”

Jemma Lee Arnold - Youth Participation Social Worker, Heath Farm Fostering Agency



An independent therapeutic fostering agency



“It's made me more confident going out on my bike and stuff, which I have to do for college and it's very enjoyable.”

CAMERON, AGED 16 - PARTICIPANT

## IT COULDN'T BE EASIER!

Activities could be something that young people are already doing or something completely new – and there are many possibilities that can be undertaken at home. We know things have not been easy in 2020 with the pandemic, and some of 2021 will also be affected, but the Duke of Edinburgh's Award can still be actioned, even under restrictions, social distancing requirements and time limitations.

“We have successfully implemented the Duke of Edinburgh's programme within our school day as part of an alternative curriculum, designating one day per week to concentrate on some areas of the award.”

Using the Duke of Edinburgh as a framework for positive engagement, our model is one of confronting negative behaviours and developing positive behaviours through a programme of challenging tasks focused on personal development.

The students have transferred these new skills into the classroom setting. For example, one of our past students with autism would sometimes struggle and become very frustrated when not able to do or complete a task in lessons and this would lead to him lashing out. However, in doing the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and spending time out on the water kayaking/paddling, learning new water sports, helped him better control his emotions in other areas. He was able to adapt himself and his behaviours to be more positive and proactive. He was successful in completing his Silver award last year and is now in a fulltime college placement.

It has been a great experience so far, not only for the students, but for the staff as well, and I feel the programme has allowed for the development of positive relationships between students and education staff outside of the classroom. Leading to more open and personal discussions, and building on the trust they share.”

Roberto Delucchi – Teacher, The Grange Therapeutic School

## SO WHY SHOULD A YOUNG PERSON DO A DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S AWARD?

It is hard to list all the benefits of achieving a Duke of Edinburgh's Award, but here are a few.

## THEY WILL...

- Have lots of fun
- Be healthier and happier
- Meet incredible people and make lasting friendships
- Have amazing new experiences
- Find talents they didn't know they had
- Gain skills that employers value, which they can reference on their CV
- Become more confident and independent
- Stand out from the crowd in college, university, and job applications
- Make memories that will last a lifetime
- Feel more connected to their world and the people in it

15

“Because of the launch of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award across the group, I have been able to work with young people I may never have worked with in my role as a family support worker and our Duke of Edinburgh lead. I have also been able to work and liaise with some amazing staff across the National Fostering Group and Outcomes First Group who are also running Duke of Edinburgh programmes. Working with other staff across the group has improved my practice and work with young people because I get different strategies and a different viewpoint about how to deliver Duke of Edinburgh from other professionals. This helps me give more options to my young people if they are struggling, and more advice to help them with their Duke of Edinburgh's awards. I have been able to build better, more relaxed, relationships with the young people as the awards are fun. The Duke of Edinburgh programme has been something they love to do and choose to get involved in.”

Jess Sudworth – Participation Lead, Fostering Solutions Greater Manchester

If you would like a young person to get involved in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award through one of our services, please contact the service lead who will be able to assist.





We track the attainment of children in foster care no matter where they live or which school they attend.

## NARROWING THE GAP

# EDUCATION ATTAINMENT – FOSTERING

Although this year's exams were cancelled across the UK due to COVID-19 and school closures, young people were still able to receive centre-assessed grades for GCSEs or Scottish Nationals. These grades recognised the efforts they had put into their education up to March and were

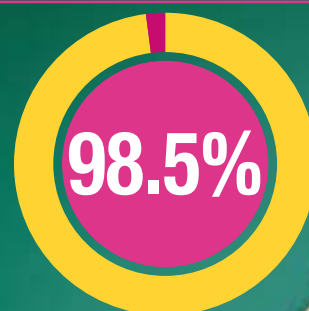
based on what their schools thought they were likely to achieve had they had the chance to sit their exams. During the summer of 2020, for the third year running, we collated this data from across all our services in the National Fostering Group.

## ACADEMIC YEAR 2019-2020

### YEAR 11 QUALIFICATIONS

Year 11 students undertook 1434 qualifications, including GCSEs, BTECs, vocational qualifications and other relevant qualifications.

The total qualification pass rate was an impressive 98.5% (2018-2019 = 96%)

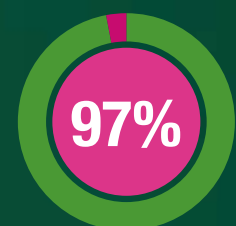


### YEAR 11 GCSEs

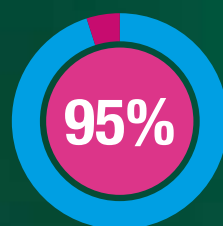
Of the 1434 qualifications taken, 1202 of these were GCSEs in a range of subjects.

The total GCSE pass rate was also impressive at 98.5%

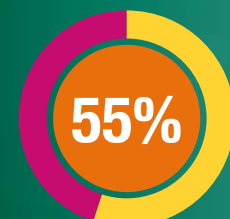
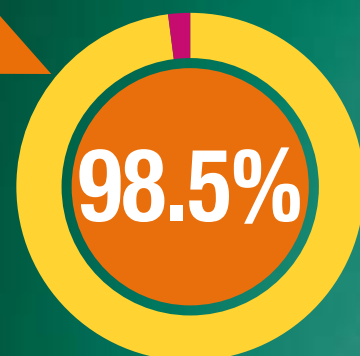
Our three year trend shows that we continue to narrow the gap for those young people in our fostering division:



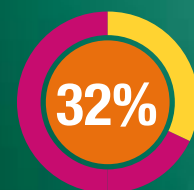
2018-2019 = 97%



2017-2018 = 95%



55% were at a Grade 4 or above (2018-2019 = 42%)



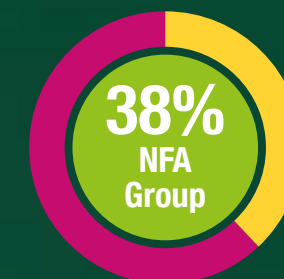
32% were at a Grade 5 or above (2018-2019 = 28%)

### YEAR 11 GCSE ENGLISH AND MATHS

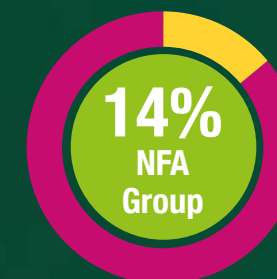


GCSE English and Maths combined pass rate was 98% (2018-2019 = 95%)

GCSE English and Maths combined Grade 4 or above was 38% (2018-2019 = 26%)



GCSE English and Maths combined Grade 5 or above was 14% (2018-2019 = 16%)

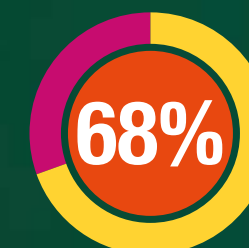


### YEAR 6 SATS

In England in 2020, Year 6 Standard Attainment Tests (SATS) were cancelled, however, unlike at the higher levels, schools were not asked to submit centre-assessed levels for their students. Where we were able to collect predicted SATs levels, we did! We are very proud to be able to celebrate the progress of our Year 6 children with you here:

#### READING

68% achieved the expected standard in Reading



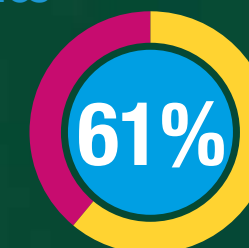
#### WRITING

53% achieved the expected standard in Writing.



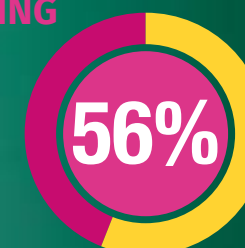
#### MATHEMATICS

61% achieved the expected standard in Mathematics.



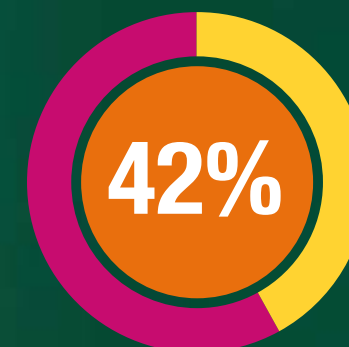
#### GRAMMAR, PUNCTUATION AND SPELLING

56% achieved the expected standard in GPS.

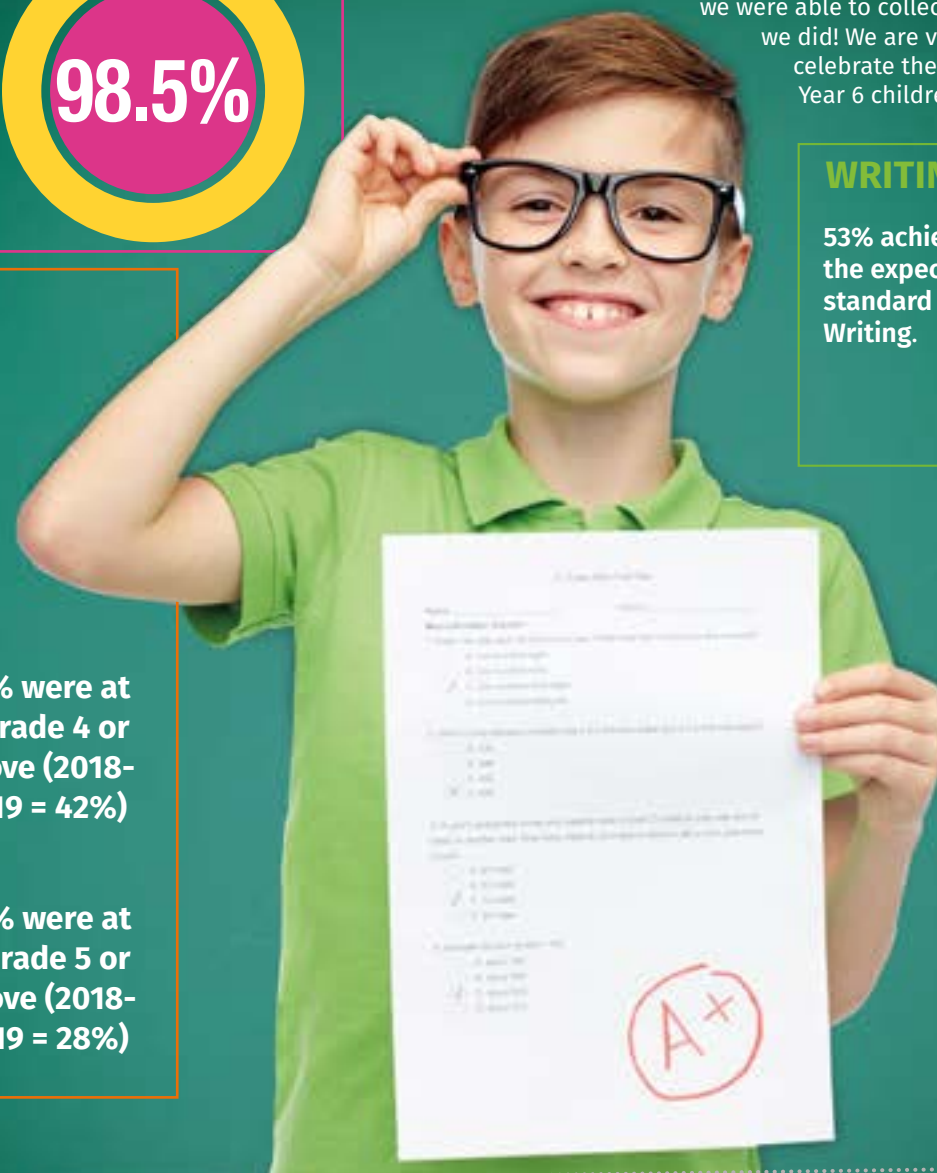


#### COMBINED MEASURE

42% achieved the expected standard in the combined measure of Reading, Writing and Mathematics.



We continue to focus throughout 2021 on supporting our children and young people with a changing landscape in education due to the pandemic, and helping them to achieve excellent results for their next steps.





## CONRAD

Back in the autumn of 2018 in our magazine for young people, we featured Conrad, a young man who had just started Year 12 after a gaining a very impressive set of GCSE results. You can read the article from 2018 here:

**A young person with Pathway Care is celebrating impressive results in his exams after three years of hard work. GCSE student Conrad secured high marks in 11 subjects, including grades of 9 in History, Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics and English Literature. He also added an A in Business Studies and an A\* in Systems and Controls — putting his interest in technology and computers to good use.**

18

A keen windsurfer, paddle-boarder and PC gamer, Conrad highlighted his satisfaction with the marks and detailed his future plans, saying:

“The hardest part of studying wasn’t completing the work itself — a lot of that came naturally — it was more about remembering all the things I’d learned. My foster family were supportive — especially when it came to reminding me to take a break sometimes. Since finishing my exams, I’ve joined a gym and enjoyed time off from studying but I’m back at college now doing A Level Mathematics, Further Mathematics, Physics and Geography. I’m not sure what career I want to follow yet but I’m interested in engineering and science.”

Congratulations Conrad, we look forward to seeing what you do next!



## FAST FORWARD ONE YEAR TO 2019

Conrad was in his first year of A Levels, and he joined two expeditions through our partnership with British Exploring Society: the first one for eight nights up in the Scottish Cairngorms and the second one for three weeks in the Peruvian Amazon. These expedition opportunities broadened Conrad’s experience and allowed him to develop further a whole host of skills. British Exploring were very impressed with Conrad on expedition, citing him to be a star of the future.



PERUVIAN AMAZON

“I’m really glad I went as it was a unique experience and one I won’t forget. In the last week you got to decide what you wanted to do and I got to go off on my own and test my navigation skills to find my own way back. This was one of the best bits for me. It was also interesting meeting different people who I wouldn’t usually meet - people from lots of different backgrounds and places.”

## FAST FORWARD ANOTHER YEAR TO 2020

Conrad received three A\* grades for A Level Mathematics, Further Mathematics and Physics, a feat that those around him put down to his work ethic of studying hard and being committed to learning. His foster family could not have been prouder of him and said, “*he has always worked so hard with his studies, so to achieve these outstanding results is a real achievement.*”

These remarkable grades secured him his dream of going to Oxford University, where he started his first year of an Economics and Management degree autumn 2020. Although university life is not quite what it would be in a normal year, Conrad is making the best of it and says: “*The first term was interesting being at Oxford but doing the majority of lectures online from my room, but it was manageable and hopefully next year it will be back to being able to go to lectures at the university.*”

*We wish you all the best with your university career Conrad and look forward to hearing more about you in the future!*

## ASHRAF

Success stories come in many different forms and one heartening story from one of our fostering services this year is of Ashraf, an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child, who came to the UK from Syria in the Spring of 2018 with virtually no English. Ashraf was very scared when his local authority placed him with one of our foster families and they report that it took him a long time to relax in their home, but that through patience and a gentle approach he finally started coming out of his shell. Ashraf, like many unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, had been traumatised by life in Syria, but had also had a very difficult and upsetting journey from Syria to the UK. He was experiencing flashbacks during the day, which caused panic attacks, and nightmares at night, causing him to feel very low. Our foster family worked hard at breaking down the language



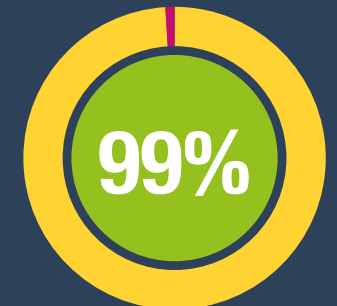
barrier so that they were able to comfort Ashraf and with some interventions, the panic attacks and nightmares lessened.

Enrolling at a local school, Ashraf embarked on Year 10 in September 2018 and, despite still not speaking much English, worked hard to learn the language and applied himself to study.

We are all extremely proud of Ashraf as this summer he achieved two Grade 2s in GCSE English Language and Mathematics, which given his starting point back in 2018 is a huge success! Ashraf has now started a Level 2 course at college and is looking forward to his future.

“He is a different young man from the one who came to live with us back in 2018. He is so much more confident, he joins in with everything and has a brilliant sense of humour. When he first arrived, he hardly spoke, had his head down, he looked broken by life. To see him happy, healthy and enjoying life is so rewarding for us and we couldn’t be prouder of his GCSE results!”

## YEAR 11 DESTINATIONS - SEPTEMBER 2020



99% of Year 11s from fostering services moved into a positive destination



100% of Year 11s from our residential children’s homes moved into a positive destination



98% of Year 11s from our special schools moved into a positive destination, many stay with us in one of our schools

Record number of 18 year olds from our fostering services supported to attend a university course

19



# SCHOOL EDUCATION ATTAINMENT

Celebrations for students & staff on an amazing set of results this year

**F**or our own independent special schools, GCSE results day is a great opportunity to reflect on the work and achievement of all our students, and all the many other ways, big and small, where students have made huge progress whilst in one of our education settings.

This year, across all our schools, 235 students have gained 615 GCSE passes in a variety of different subjects, plus 19 students in our Scottish schools have achieved Nationals at different levels. Students also achieved over 650 other qualifications including BTECs, NVQs, Functional Skills, City and Guilds, ASDAN and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

However, all our schools are very different, catering for different needs and with different cohorts every year, so comparisons are futile. A really good way of judging the success of our schools, is in the student progress stories they have to share and here a just a handful:



One Year 11 student who started at **Glebedale School** in Year 7 but who was working at Year 1/2 level, has made outstanding progress, achieving 8 GCSEs, four of which were Grade 4 or higher and a number of Level 2 BTECs. This amazing result brings him in line with his peers and has helped him to gain a place at a mainstream college on a Level 3 course.



Another Year 10 student at **Belmont House School** secured 6 GCSEs, all at Grade 5 and above, with a Grade 9 in English Language and a Grade 7 in English Literature, plus other qualifications. What an achievement!

**ACORN EDUCATION  
AND CARE**

**OptionsAutism**



Due to COVID-19 restrictions in their area on GCSE results day, the team at **Reddish Hall School** in Stockport hand-delivered results to students at their homes. One of their students, Ayman, was very happy with his results. Ayman had experienced a very difficult journey in mainstream education before starting at Reddish Hall School. He had suffered a great deal of loss and struggled with education. On joining the school, he settled in very well, commenting that the care and support of the staff team made an important and significant difference to his life. With the help of staff, he has now secured a place at college to do Electrical Installation, his dream since starting at Reddish Hall School.



At Falkland House School in Fife Ryan commented

“When I started at Falkland House School I did not think I would achieve Highers or ever be studying at Advanced Higher. I feel now that I have better prospects for the future.”



FALKLAND  
HOUSE SCHOOL **fhs**

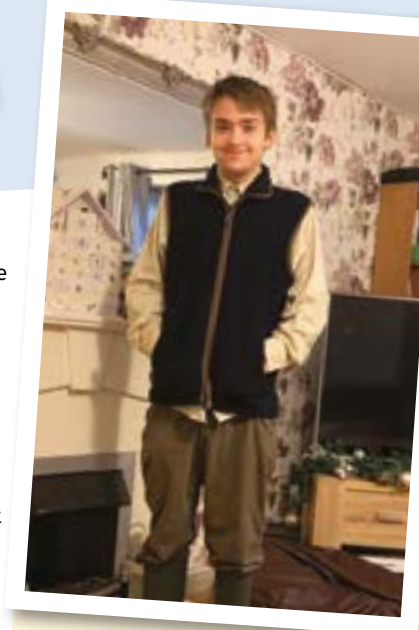
Another of Falkland's students, Bradley, said

“I feel that my future is bright. I am going to college to study computer games development and I would like to go to university.”



Kenan from **New Barn School** in Berkshire became a bit of a local legend, due to the work experience placement New Barn

organised for him at the estate where the Great British Bake Off is filmed! He is well known in the farming community surrounding the school and highly thought of as a productive worker with lots to give to the community. Before this placement, Kenan had a difficult journey with depression, but the placement, combined with his success in this agricultural field has helped him to be positive about his achievements and he has gained all the qualifications to secure a place at agricultural college in September.



Kenan's mum says that New Barn School has supported him to “turn his world around” and is very grateful for the support of the team.

“We aim to deliver for our young people and help them make their way in the world. The results from our schools in 2020, whether GCSEs, Scottish Nationals, BTECs, NVQs, ASDANs, or any other qualification or award at any level, is just one of the ways where we can visibly see that progress! Well done to everyone on their achievements and a sincere thank you to staff who have gone above and beyond in this very strange year to make it possible. We are very proud of every one of you.”

Richard Power, Managing Director of Children's Education and Residential

WE ARE PROUD TO SHARE THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS WITH YOU:

- 615 GCSE passes, including the top grades of 9, 8 and 7
- 100% GCSE pass rate at Acorn Park, Baston House, Bramfield House, Falkland House, Glebedale, Heath Farm, Jubilee, Longdon Park, The Grange, Underley Gardens and Waterloo Lodge
- Bumper year for our Scottish schools with Nationals
- 95% of all leavers secured an English and Mathematics qualification
- 100% of Year 11 at Oaktree House School in Cornwall passed their English and Mathematics GCSEs, with 87.5% achieving a Grade 4 or above in Mathematics
- Bramfield House School in Suffolk celebrate their best results in 10 years – all 79 GCSEs received a pass with almost 50% at a Grade 4 or above
- 100% GCSE pass rate 3 years in a row for Acorn Park School in Norfolk
- 100% of leavers at Crookhey Hall School in Lancashire have been accepted on a college course or apprenticeship, including a student who will be starting a Level 2 Digital Media course after great success in GCSE Photography
- 100% pass rate for all ASDAN qualifications taken at Options Higford School near Telford
- 100% pass rate for BTEC, Functional Skills and all other qualifications taken at New Barn School in Berkshire
- 100% of the first cohort of KS4 students at Wenlock School in Dudley all achieved qualifications in English, Mathematics and ICT, plus all leavers got the grades required to secure their chosen future destinations
- Options Kinsale School in Wales celebrated 100% pass rate for all Level 1 qualifications



# ONLINE LEARNING DURING LOCKDOWN

**B**ack in September 2019, the first pupils started to attend Acorn Digital Learning (ADL), the group's inclusive online school.

Three specialist teachers in English, Mathematics and Science started to deliver live learning to groups consisting of secondary age pupils. As we moved into 2020, the online school had grown and was serving students for whom education at a bricks and mortar school had become impossible for a variety of reasons.

Our residential schools for our more complex children and those schools for specifically identified pupils were always open. Whilst schools and teaching staff all over the UK were suddenly hit with the challenge of finding new ways to connect with their students, we were able to immediately support our schools to continue to deliver high quality learning to those pupils who would not be attending in person. During March we launched our project – soon to become known as the ADL platform.

**ACORN**  
Digital Learning™

An inclusive online school

745 staff accounts were activated and, of these staff, 85% received training within the first 14 days of the launch. To give our students access to the platform and great quality live teaching, 1800 pupils were set up on the platform. Within three days of launching, Bramfield House School and Heath Farm School began full live teaching through the ADL platform. Other schools used it in a 'mix and match' style, to meet the needs of different students' home set ups or educational needs.

**300  
LIVE  
LESSONS  
A DAY**

The online classrooms were facilitated through Education Zoom™ with full safeguarding security features. Staff also received additional e-Safety training in the use of an online classroom. The recall of recorded lessons also made it possible for a teacher to share good examples and

'bounce back' to recap on prior learning and topics. It also allowed us to ensure that the quality of learning did not dip during this time; headteachers and senior leaders were able to fulfill virtual learning walks and lesson observations by joining the lessons and carrying out quality checks.

**DURING THE FIRST HALF  
OF THE SUMMER TERM:**

- 24 of our schools made significant use of the platform
- The total student number was 1264
- An average of 300 live lessons were taught through the ADL platform each day



## THERAPEUTIC WELLBEING

During this difficult year, schools also used the platform for the purposes of therapeutic and clinical interventions, along with family liaison and wellbeing sessions. This worked very well in reaching out to our students, and their families, and strengthening the bonds between home and school.

The critical component in this project was in having the Acorn Digital Learning platform, as no matter what the content, we were able to support the delivery through live learning directly to students. What was even more important was that trusted and familiar adults delivered the content.

Those schools who embraced the platform during the spring and summer term have continued to use it during the autumn term as we continue to respond to the challenges COVID-19 poses to our schools. At Acorn Digital Learning, we have built capacity should any other service require support as we continue to address the challenges of this global pandemic into 2021 and beyond, plus the core service of being an alternative education provider through high quality online digital learning continues as normal.

[www.acorndigitallearning.co.uk](http://www.acorndigitallearning.co.uk)

## What do our pupils, parents and teachers say about the Acorn Digital Learning Platform?

**Jacob is a Key Stage 3 pupil**

**HIS TEACHER COMMENTS:** "He has performed very well during these tricky times. His engagement during the lessons has been fantastic and his willingness to complete work at home independently is even more impressive. Jacob's ability to handle mistakes he has made and work through them has been the most pleasing to see, along with his ability to talk about what is happening in his life and what he is happy with."

**JACOB TOLD US:**

“There are not as many distractions, it is easier to concentrate and complete the work.”

**HIS PARENT FED BACK:**

“Jacob has benefited from the one to one time with his teacher but also seeing his classmates. Jacob seemed really happy when completing the lessons online.”

**Ethan is a Key Stage 4 pupil**

**EATHAN'S TEACHER SHARED:** "Maths is normally a trigger point for Ethan but since starting the lessons through Acorn Digital Learning platform, he has engaged well. He has completed all of the work required of him, either through the learning portal or using My Maths."

“Ethan asked if music lessons could be brought into his weekly schedule. This was arranged and he is now learning how to play the guitar through ADL/Zoom.”

“Since starting the online journey, Mum has proved to be a brilliant support to him and I feel their relationship has grown in strength. She can also see what he is learning and how the teachers are with Ethan, and this has given her a real comfort that we have Ethan's best interests at heart.”

**Sam is a Key Stage 2 pupil.**

He was accessing an average of 5 hours 20 minutes learning time per day.

Sam's mother has shared that Sam particularly enjoyed engaging in sensory activities and is able to spend a long time doing these. She reported that she felt:

“School was doing an amazing job at supporting home learning. Having two ADL live lessons a day has been extremely useful, especially on the days we find it difficult to get any other learning done.”



# OPTIONS AUTISM ADULTS

## OptionsAutism

**O**ptions Autism Adult Services are implementing a goal attainment scale - the San Martin Scale - as a way of supporting the people who live in our services to increase their independence and work towards attaining a better quality of life. This person-centred approach ensures that we decide targets based on information gathered from the opinions and desires of the people we support, in addition to assessments that are more formal.

There are numerous quality of life instruments in the field of intellectual disabilities, however, most of them focus on those people with the highest levels of functioning, while only a few are suitable for people with more profound intellectual disabilities. People with a severe learning disability are often extremely dependent on third parties when it comes to the satisfaction of their needs, thus their quality of life also depends greatly on those who support them. The San Martin Scale enables professionals to identify areas where service delivery could be improved upon, based on evidence through the assessment

of individuals and related to quality of life.

So far we have run a trial of the San Martin Scale in a small number of services. Initial feedback



is very positive and we have received some heartening evidence of progress:

For Example, Chris indicated that he would like to start spending time with others and so goals were developed to offer him opportunities to socialise within the comfort of a structured activity.

The three areas that Chris chose to work on this year are; making friends, choosing trips and choosing meals. SMART goals were then agreed within these generalised areas. Chris is now attending his choice of vocational sessions with others and staff are looking at involving him in groups with people who have a shared interest. He is having weekly therapy sessions to work on developing his communication via AAC; specifically using the iPad app Proloquotogo to enable him to make choices related to meals and trips. We expect to see a further increase in his scores in the future.



Chris attending a themed Halloween Party

**In next year's report we will be updating you as to further roll-out and progress within our adult services.**

### MEASURABLE GOALS HELP US:

- Pinpoint priorities for the development and maintenance of quality of life for the people we support
- Provide an evidence based means of monitoring and evaluating progress
- Support in the identification and development of appropriate Interventions
- Support defensible evidence based practice which in turn supports good outcomes for the people we support

### HOW DO WE SET GOALS?

**Three priority goals are identified for each person, based upon a Quality of Life Framework, which:**

- Must be a relevant area of focus for the person we support
- Must be observable and measurable
- Must be agreed on by the person and all involved in the person's care

# CASE STUDY ADULT SERVICES

## JOSHUA'S LIFE IS CHANGED FOR THE BETTER!

### BACKGROUND

Joshua has a diagnosis of Severe Learning Disability and Autism. He has no formal diagnosis of mental illness, however he presents with anxiety much of the time. Unfortunately, the behaviours displayed by Joshua resulted in several previous placement breakdowns, and these breakdowns led to him being admitted to a psychiatric hospital. The staff at the hospital worked hard to support Joshua. Due to his complex needs, Joshua continued to show high levels of challenging behaviour, which led to increased medication to support his overall mental health and well-being. Joshua ended up staying at the psychiatric hospital for nearly three years as no placement could meet his needs.

### HELP IN THE FORM OF PHOENIX HOUSE

In 2019, the team at Phoenix House were approached and asked to complete an admission assessment to see if the service could meet Joshua's needs. After interactions



with Joshua, careful planning, amendments to the current environment and discussions with other professionals and Joshua's family, the decision was made to accept Joshua for a placement at Phoenix house. On the 2nd March 2020, Joshua moved into his new home!

When Joshua moved in, he settled incredibly well. Whilst still showing some signs of anxiety, he was in a placement where staff worked hard to understand him as a person and the functions behind his behaviours. Joshua made significant progress and is now able to communicate his needs through both communication aids, which have been put



in place by the team, and through repetitive behaviours, which the team are working hard to understand.

### JOSHUA'S CONTINUING JOURNEY

Recently, Joshua has enjoyed a walk in the local community for the first time in years. He is enjoying family visits from his mum, dad and sister, and we are carefully planning a visit to the family home for the first time in over three years. Joshua's health needs are being managed with personal hygiene routines being developed through active support models, teeth cleaning, shaving and haircuts. Desensitisation sessions at the local dentist have been started with the aim to help him access some much needed treatment. This is going very well and recently he allowed the dentist to look inside his mouth, which is incredible!

### THE REGISTERED MANAGER REPORTS,

“ Using the knowledge, commitment and experience of the staff team has meant we are able to interact with Joshua to meet his needs and support him, rather than use medication to deal with his behaviours. This personal interaction helps Joshua to progress in all areas and understand more about his world. The Phoenix House team continue to grow in confidence when working with Joshua. With the ongoing support of Joshua's family and the commitment of the team, our aim is to help Joshua to live his best life. ”



# REDUCING RESTRICTIVE PRACTICE

**A**s the newly formed Outcomes First Group, have continued the work we started in 2019 against our commitment to reducing restrictive physical intervention in all our settings and the strengthening of our involvement and alignment to the Restraint Reduction Network (RRN). We remain ambitious and heartened by our progress to improve the experiences of all the children, young people and adults we educate and care for, and have taken some big steps forward in this area.

26 Last year we reflected upon the sector wide over reliance on restrictive physical interventions to support vulnerable people and we considered what we could do to ensure that we are as aspirational and thoughtful in our approach as we can be. As a result, we set a cross-divisional project group to work to deliver on our aspirations. The group carried out an analysis of all six restrictive physical intervention models in use across our newly combined group (e.g. PRICE, MAPA), to be able to identify the most effective, and consolidate our approach. Based on our belief that by having one way of doing things, that we believed to be the best, we could enable the group to better support our services in using the best model as effectively as possible.

We wanted to understand the strength of the theoretical concepts that underpinned the models, including de-escalation strategies, the effectiveness and safety of any holds used and the credibility of their own approach to accreditation and self-scrutiny. This led us to a clear consensus and commitment to the MAPA model (Management of Actual or Potential Aggression). The model, developed by the Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI), is BILD



ofg OUTCOMESFIRST GROUP



accredited under the Restraint Reduction Training Standards. MAPA is designed to boost staff confidence and skills, improve organisational culture, demonstrate compliance, reduce risks and strengthen relationships. We were really enthused by the values-led ethos of the model, and its deep theoretical element, which supports staff to reduce the need for any physical element for the management of behaviours that challenge. They stood out head and shoulders above the rest!

Alongside this work, we have continued to build on our clinical and well-being hubs and the roll out of the introductory level of our therapeutic parenting programme. Aligned to MAPA, therapeutic parenting

approaches strengthen our staff teams' ability to develop trusting relationships with children, young people and adults, understand their experiences and the communications in their behaviour, and apply playful, accepting, empathic and inquiring strategies (PACE – Golding / Hughes) to meet complex needs and further reduce the need for physical interventions. The two go hand in hand to ensure we are meeting the needs of those we educate and care for at a high level.

Moving forward into 2021, we now have an overarching governance approach to MAPA and restrictive physical interventions that will be supported by newly implemented IT systems. This will allow easy access to site, regional and group wide data that will guide improvement and reduction strategies further. We are really excited to keep on developing and improving our services with this approach in 2021, reduce the need for restrictive physical interventions and create better outcomes for our children, young people and adults.

# OUR THERAPEUTIC APPROACH

## IS AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING WE DO



**H**ere at Outcomes First Group, 2020 saw the introduction of our joined up clinical / well-being regions led by Consultant Clinical Psychologists and Education Psychologists to provide enhanced levels of support, advice and guidance to education and care staff, parents and foster parents across all our residential care, education and fostering services. Through 'multi-professional' teamwork, we can ensure everyone's support needs are met, creating a nurturing network around young people. We also wanted to ensure that we had a 'gold-standard' therapeutic parenting approach across all our services and in June 2020 began training foster parents and staff in our new accredited course.

### PROMPT ACTION

Speed is of the essence when tackling issues impacting on young people's mental health, to prevent problems from escalating. Vulnerable children may require urgent expert support to address an eating disorder or other behaviours that put their health at risk such as self-harm or online misuse. Time spent online soared during lockdown, and while the internet has been a lifeline in many ways, it has also left young people vulnerable to online abuse, bullying or intense feelings of isolation and anxiety.

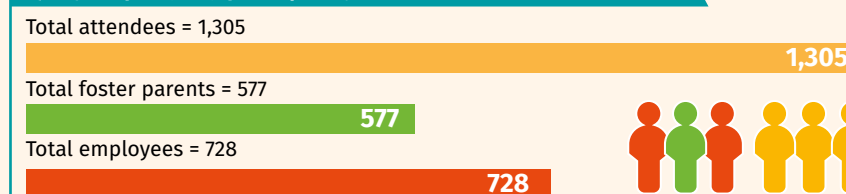
Knowing how to access expert support swiftly is paramount. We have established a wellbeing/clinical support line which is managed by a senior clinician, ensuring that any carer, parent or staff member who needs advice or support has an immediate first port of call. From that first contact, they will be guided to the most appropriate support.

### LOCAL EXPERTISE

Being able to trust the source of advice and support is critical when seeking help for those with mental health difficulties. Despite the digital era giving us so much information at our fingertips, there is no substitute for sound local expertise from real people who are part of the community.

At a local level, we are creating more wellbeing hubs and locality-based teams to complement our local offer and to enable us to provide additional services on a commissioned basis. This enables us to simplify access to key therapeutic support for children and young people such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, clinical or education psychology.

### FROM JUNE TO DECEMBER:



### THERAPEUTIC KNOWLEDGE

Understanding the impact of trauma on children and learning effective strategies for working with them are fundamental to helping them manage their difficulties. To maximise outcomes, therapeutic knowledge needs to be the common thread running between all parties involved in young people's care, in particular knowledge of:

- complex trauma and how it affects a child's development
- interpreting a child's behaviour as a form of communication
- the four pillars of PACE (Playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy) and its importance in developing relationships with children
- reflective practice and how to apply it in a carer's/educator's role

Our therapeutic parenting training programmes – accredited by the British Psychological Society – are being rolled out rapidly to all staff and carers throughout our organisation, from foster parents, to residential care workers, to staff in schools and even our executive team.

Ultimately, success with children and young people is measured through wellbeing – getting the right support for our young people and their care team enables them to thrive in their education or care environment.



# INSPECTION OUTCOMES

## EDUCATION



28

### SCHOOLS:

#### SCHOOL:

Bramfield House School  
INSPECTION DATES:  
28 to 30 January 2020



“Pupils’ personal development is at the heart of the school’s work. Staff model positive behaviours and attitudes for pupils throughout the day. This helps pupils to adopt respectful attitudes towards others and accept differences. They learn about other ways of viewing the world and make comparisons with their own lives. Pupils develop a thorough understanding of how to be a responsible citizen in modern Britain. Pupils new to the school settle quickly because their teachers take each individual’s needs into account. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of education when they leave the school at 16.”

#### SCHOOL:

The Holden School  
INSPECTION DATES:  
4 to 6 February 2020



“Pupils appreciate the education that The Holden School provides. They told us that the school has helped them to get back into education. Most pupils now have much more positive attitudes to learning because of the school’s work. Pupils improve their behaviour when they join the school. This is because staff take the time to get to know pupils well. The school’s routines are carefully planned. The staff carefully manage transitions between activities. This helps to keep pupils calm. It also helps to improve their well-being.”



29

#### SCHOOL:

Jubilee School  
INSPECTION DATES:  
25 to 27 February 2020



“Pupils are safe at this school because staff members know them so well. They know that staff will look after them well. As one pupil said, ‘Staff will always help me if I’m feeling down.’ Staff are committed to providing a nurturing environment for pupils. Reading is a strength in this school, especially at primary phase. Pupils receive extra help with early reading skills should they need it. Pupils read books that match their ability. Able readers have access to challenging texts. Cosy library corners in primary phase inspire pupils and they love to read. Secondary aged pupils read a variety of materials including newspapers, novels and extracts from books.”

#### SCHOOL:

Acorn Park School  
INSPECTION DATES:  
25 to 27 February 2020



“Pupils enjoy coming to school. They love the open spaces. They like tending the animals on the premises. Pupils value the small groups and friendly staff. They feel they are treated as individuals. Pupils say that staff and other pupils are accepting of each other. Leaders provide a range of trips and visits that pupils enjoy. These help pupils to develop independent living skills.”

#### SCHOOL:

Heath Farm School  
INSPECTION DATES:  
3 to 5 March 2020



“Pupils feel happy and safe at Heath Farm. They say that they enjoy coming to this school because of the friends that they make and the caring staff. For many pupils, experiences of education in the past have not always been positive. They often arrive at the school with low self-esteem. Due to the caring pastoral support provided, pupils settle in quickly and start to flourish. Parents are supportive of the school. One parent summed up the view of others when they said, ‘It feels like you are a part of a family when you have a child at Heath Farm.’

#### SCHOOL:

Meadowcroft School  
INSPECTION DATES:  
8 December 2020



“Pupils that were spoken with during the inspection said that they feel safe at school and well looked after. They know who to turn to if they have a concern. Pupils say that there has been a strong focus on the prevention of bullying that has raised awareness of this issue and reduced incidents. Leaders have placed more emphasis on supporting pupils’ mental health over the last few weeks and months. Pupils receive mental health support from therapists within school and also from external agencies. The DSL and safeguarding team keep close tabs on pupils receiving this support to ensure it is having the intended impact.”



## → RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOLS:

### RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOL:

Bramfield House School

### INSPECTION DATES:

28 to 30 January 2020



“The opportunities and activities provided to children are excellent. The staff have taken children skiing in France, to football matches at Wembley and to see theatrical productions such as ‘The Lion King’. Community engagement is positive and the children participate in voluntary work. Taking part in community and charitable events gives the children confidence, a sense of pride and a desire to help others.”

### RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOL:

The Grange Therapeutic School

### INSPECTION DATES:

6 to 7 October 2020



“Children benefit from positive relationships with staff, as well as clear boundaries and routines. This enables them to confidently take steps towards independence. Staff are child-centred and flexible in their support of children’s individual needs and plans. This helps children to settle quickly, promoting their health and well-being. Children enjoy being at the school. One child reported that he was ‘really excited’ about moving from one of the homes to the upper school residential provision. When asked if he had any worries, he replied: ‘Not in a million years. I give the home 10 out of 10.’”



30



## INSPECTION OUTCOMES

outcomes are very good indeed. There is careful decision-making about which children can live with which carers.”

“There are strong and positive relationships between carers and children, carers and the agency and the agency and other professionals. Some external professionals made very positive comments about the carers and agency staff. These relationships help children to feel valued and settled.”

## FOSTERING

### FOSTERING

Brighter Futures

### INSPECTION DATES:

13 to 17 January 2020

“The agency is having a very positive impact on the experiences and outcomes of children. For some children, the



WE ARE OFSTED'S  
HIGHEST  
PERFORMING LARGE  
PROVIDER



88% of our  
stand-alone  
children's  
homes were  
good or  
outstanding

Compared to only 80% nationally  
22% of our stand-alone children's homes were  
outstanding (sector average 15%)



## CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL

### RESIDENTIAL HOME:

Moorlands

### INSPECTION DATES:

2 to 3 January 2020

“Staff are creative about how they gain children’s views about things that are important to them. This includes using individual key-work sessions and other informal opportunities. Each child receives feedback from the manager about any requests that they make. As a result, children feel that their views are valued. One child told the inspector, ‘The manager is great. He listens, and things change as a result of what we say.’”

### RESIDENTIAL HOME:

The Birches

### INSPECTION DATES:

7 to 8 January 2020

“Children thrive as a result of the bespoke care that they receive from highly skilled, knowledgeable and passionate staff. Staff are committed to enriching children’s lives by giving each child access to a wide range of activities. These include opportunities to go on holidays abroad, participate in voluntary work and charity events and attend local clubs. Consequently, children have fun.”

### RESIDENTIAL HOME:

Barton Care

### INSPECTION DATES:

8 to 9 January 2020

“The children and young people enjoy good relationships with the staff. This helps them to feel safe and secure. The staff are sensitive to the individual needs of the children and young people and provide good levels of care and attention. Care practice is child-centred.”

### RESIDENTIAL HOME:

Villa Farm House

### INSPECTION DATES:

13 to 14 January 2020

“Children make exceptional progress as a result of the high-quality, individualised care that they receive. One social worker told the inspector, ‘Staff really get to know each child individually. They really understand the child; they listen to them and this helps children to trust them.’ Children are encouraged to play and to have fun. They live in a house that is alive with laughter.” →

31



**RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

The Laurels

**INSPECTION DATES:**

15 to 16 January 2020

“Children are happy and content in their home. They benefit from spontaneous, affectionate care from staff who genuinely care about them. Children enjoy spending quality time with members of staff. They benefit from an activity programme that reflects their individual interests and encourages them to lead an active and healthy life.”

32

**RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

Willow House

**INSPECTION DATES:**

20 to 21 January 2020

“This is a very caring and nurturing home where children make good progress and have positive experiences that enhance their lives. Children are happy and settled here. They get on well with each other and with the staff who care for them. One child said: ‘It’s really good here, really chill.’ Children can be themselves.”

**RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

Aqueduct House

**INSPECTION DATES:**

22 to 23 January 2020

“Children benefit from a high standard of care from staff who meet their needs. The overall experiences of children are positive. They develop trusting relationships with staff, forged through open and honest communication. This is the cornerstone of how they make progress.”

**RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

South View

**INSPECTION DATES:**

27 January 2020

“Children are making good progress and they are benefiting from the therapeutic parenting approach that is used by staff. They are happy, they like the staff and they feel that they can talk to the staff about any worries or issues. Children’s voices are listened to and their choices are acted on wherever possible.”

**RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

Becca House

**INSPECTION DATES:**

27 to 28 January 2020

“Children make exceptional overall progress in all aspects of their lives. Staff offer a nurturing and extremely supportive environment that is embedded by trusting relationships. Staff show a great deal of empathy and playfulness with children. This, combined with a comprehensive understanding of individual needs and histories of children, contributes to excellent outcomes for children. A staff member said: ‘This is not a job for our staff team. It is our role to replicate a family environment, which means staff offering love, affection, and holding children in mind.’ “

**RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

Poppy Lodge

**INSPECTION DATES:**

30 January 2020

“The children continue to make steady, and in some cases very good, progress. For example, when children are old enough to learn to drive they are supported to access driving lessons. Children are also helped to develop their independence through part-time work and increased time with their friends in the community. The children are encouraged and enabled to make a positive difference to the home and in the local community.”

**RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

Haven Lodge

**INSPECTION DATES:**

3 to 4 February 2020

“Staff work hard to prioritise children’s education. For example, staff will remain at school with children until they are calm and ready to learn. This ensures that children are well supported to achieve their potential.”

**RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

Ashley

**INSPECTION DATES:**

13 to 14 February 2020

“Children are encouraged to share their dreams, goals and ambitions. The manager and the staff help the children to fulfil these by giving them opportunities and ways to do so. This includes experiencing things for the first time, for example going abroad, visiting Disneyland Paris and generally pursuing their hobbies and interests outside of their education. Children spoken to during the inspection delighted in telling the inspector about where they had been and what they had been doing.”

**RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

Acorn Park Care

**INSPECTION DATES:**

25th February 2020

“One child has been provided with a bespoke package to meet his specific needs and to manage his associated risks. Part of this package includes the child supporting the maintenance team, after he successfully interviewed for the position. This has increased his confidence and improved his sense of well-being. This is an innovative idea that has led to very positive outcomes.”

**RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

Beachlands

**INSPECTION DATES:**

3 to 4 March 2020

“Professionals are highly complimentary of the service. They say that they would definitely place other children in the home if they had the opportunity. They describe strong professional practice, excellent communication and positive outcomes for children.”

**RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

The Meadows

**INSPECTION DATES:**

16 March 2020

“The child accesses a range of activities in the community and within the home. He has recently started playing for a local football team. This adds to the child’s sense of belonging as well as developing his skills and talents. The relationships between staff and the child are positive. Staff encourage the child to see his family, which promotes his sense of identity.”

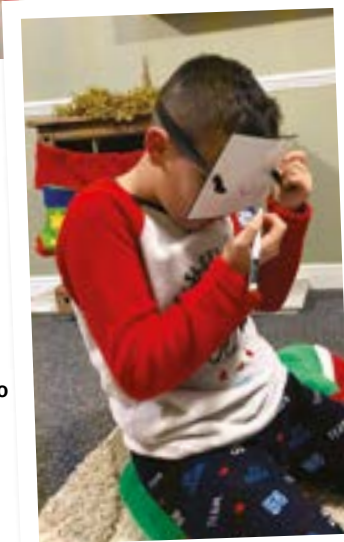
**RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

Trent Acres Care

**INSPECTION DATES:**

2 July 2020

“Staff manage children with complex needs well. Appropriate strategies are put in place to protect children’s well-being and safety. Managers and staff work in partnership with health professionals to best meet children’s healthcare needs. Social workers and parents are complimentary about the care that staff give to their children.”

**RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

Denmead

**INSPECTION DATES:**

9 to 10 September 2020

“Children present as happy and confident. Staff form strong and caring relationships of trust. Staff deliver effective, individualised care and support to promote positive change for those in their care. Children speak about their home and the staff with great affection and positivity. They feel their views are valued and give lots of examples of activities and facilities that staff provide for them on request.”

**RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

The Shires at Oakham Care

**INSPECTION DATES:**

2 to 3 September 2020

“Children are being well cared for. Staff ensured that restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic had no negative impact on children. Children who have recently moved to the home have settled in well and been well supported. A parent said, ‘A lot of effort was put into his transition.’ “

**RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

The Paddocks

**INSPECTION DATES:**

29 to 30 September 2020

“Children say they are happy living in this home. The registered manager and staff know the children well. They demonstrate a good understanding of children’s needs. They respond to children sensitively and with compassion, which means that children make good progress. Staff build positive relationships with children.”

33







**RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

Acorn Park Care

**INSPECTION DATES:**

6 to 7 October 2020

“Staff use different ways to get children’s views, and they do not let the children’s communication difficulties prevent this. Managers and staff listen and respond to these views so that children can be involved in their plans and decisions about the home that they live in.”

**RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

Weaveley

**INSPECTION DATES:**

6 to 7 October 2020

“The current group of children are very settled. The staff are all very caring and trained to meet the children’s individual needs, particularly during unforeseen events. During the national lockdown the staff quickly adapted their role and tasks to ensure that the children were still educated and engaged in activities.”

**RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

Poppy Lodge

**INSPECTION DATES:**

6 to 8 October 2020

“There are good transition processes in place. The registered manager has a clear focus on children learning key independence skills. This is to promote life skills, but also to enable children to be successful when they move on from the home. As a result, several children have experienced progress, stability and positive experiences when they have left the home.”

**RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

The Meadows

**INSPECTION DATES:**

20 to 21 October 2020

“Staff understand the young person’s views. Key-work sessions and day-to-day discussions provide him with opportunities to influence the care he receives. Where appropriate to do so, staff take the young person’s requests into account when planning his care.”

**RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

Moorlands

**INSPECTION DATES:**

21 to 22 October 2020

“Children achieve stability at this home. One child had lived in 20 placements before they moved into the home. They have now lived at the home for almost two years. Another child was not attending education. Since living at the home their attendance at school had been irregular. They now attend school almost full time.”

**RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

Trent Acres Care

**INSPECTION DATES:**

28 to 29 October 2020

“Staff provide children with highly individualised care. This supports children to make good progress. Staff’s nurturing and sensitive approach has helped children to make sustained improvements in their self-esteem and confidence.”

**RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

Oak Tree House

**INSPECTION DATES:**

October 2020

“Children have positive and strong relationships with staff. Relationships are built on mutual trust, honesty and respect. Children talk to staff about their worries and concerns and staff act to support them and keep them safe. Children say this helps them feel valued and cared for.”

**RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

Ohana

**INSPECTION DATES:**

3 to 4 November 2020

“Children like spending time with staff and they do activities together, such as shopping and watching films. The home is a positive and welcoming environment.”

**RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

Burghwood House

**INSPECTION DATES:**

2 to 3 December 2020

“Staff demonstrate an unwavering commitment to the care and support of children. Staff recognise the challenges that children face adapting to the many changes to routine and lifestyle brought about by the pandemic. They work with great empathy and understanding to support children, helping to lower their anxiety and enabling them to maintain a positive quality of life.”



**RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

Newlands

**INSPECTION DATES:**

2 to 3 December 2020

“Young people are provided with a beautiful home. The registered manager has worked hard to create a warm and welcoming environment where young people can feel safe. A social worker said, ‘She is very settled. Staff have made her feel comfortable and she has asked if she can remain living in this home. Staff have taken the time to get to know her and understand her needs. I am very happy with the home and couldn’t ask for more.’ ”

**RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

Ash House

**INSPECTION DATES:**

2 to 3 December 2020

“Staff provide young people with good-quality individualised care that meets their needs. Young people’s views, wishes and feelings are sought, listened to and well considered. The manager and staff are successful in building positive relationships with young people, which fosters a feeling of trust and belonging for young people.”

**RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

Acorn Cottage

**INSPECTION DATES:**

3 to 4 December 2020

“A significant strength of the home is how education is promoted. Children benefit from support with their learning. Children have maintained excellent levels of attendance at their schools. Teachers speak very positively about the communication and sensitive support which staff provide. This approach has enabled children to benefit from continuity and stability in an important part of their lives.”

**RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

Barton

**INSPECTION DATES:**

9 to 10 December 2020

“The staff are creative and provide individualised care, which enables the children to make progress. The staff support the children to experience the world outside of the home and school. The children are learning that time spent in the community can be exciting and fun. A parent said, ‘I cannot thank the staff enough, my son now has the opportunity to be the man that he deserves to be.’

**RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

The Spinney

**INSPECTION DATES:**

15 to 16 December 2020

“Children benefit from seeing their wishes come to life with creatively designed bedrooms. This gives children a safe space and feeling of security in the home. Children are involved in the furnishing of all areas of the home. This has created a culture of warm positive relationships, with one child describing people in the home as being like family.”

**RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

Walnut Lodge:

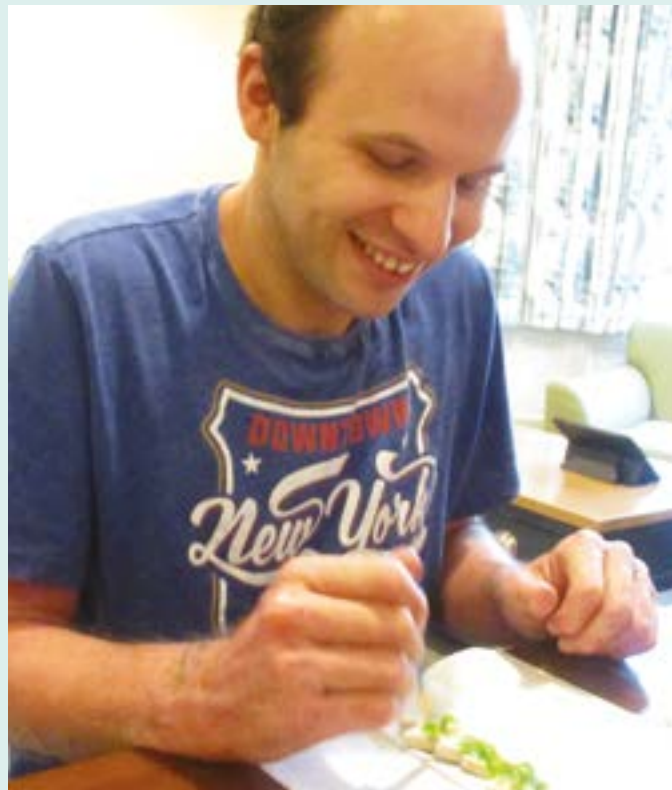
**INSPECTION DATES:**

16 to 17 December 2020

“The children and young people have established strong and positive relationships with the staff. This has assisted the children and young people to settle into their new home and feel a sense of belonging. Significant importance is given to the safety and protection of the children and young people. Robust and detailed risk assessments inform staff practice. The support, care and identified strategies are fully implemented.”







## PEOPLE'S RESIDENTIAL

### 36 HOMES



**PEOPLE'S HOME:**  
Options Bredon  
**INSPECTION DATES:**  
7 January 2020

"People continued to receive safe care and were cared for by experienced staff who had a good understanding of how to keep people safe. People were supported by trained staff who understood their needs. People were encouraged to follow a healthy diet and were as independent as possible. Relatives said people were supported to access health care professionals and people's environment was adapted for their needs. People said they were treated with kindness and in a respectful way by the staff. Staff actively encouraged the people to make choices about their care, hobbies and areas of interest."

**PEOPLE'S HOME:**  
Options Grange View  
**INSPECTION DATES:**  
3 March 2020

"Staff respected and valued people as individuals and treated them with respect and made sure their privacy and dignity were maintained. People were fully supported to be in control of their lives and be as independent as possible. People had developed trusting and positive relationships with the staff team. Staff were skilled in the communication needs of people and the in-house professionals used nationally recognised assessment tools to establish people's abilities, needs and choices. People were empowered in setting their own goals and aspirations. This resulted in people achieving positive and life changing outcomes, including one person planning their move from the home to live in the community."



**PEOPLE'S HOME:**  
Options Vernon House  
**INSPECTION DATES:**  
22 to 24 September 2020

"People received personalised care and support specific to their needs and preferences. This has been effective in supporting people to achieve goals and encouraged them to learn and grow as individuals. People were protected from the risks of harm, abuse or discrimination because staff knew what actions to take if they identified concerns. There were enough staff working to provide the support people needed. Staff understood the risks associated with the people they supported."

**PEOPLE'S HOME:**  
Options Old Vicarage  
**INSPECTION DATES:**  
14 July 2020

"People were supported to have maximum choice and control of their lives and staff supported them in the least restrictive way possible; the policies and systems in the service supported this practice. The staff on duty were caring and treated people with dignity and respect. They understood how to communicate with people effectively and in line with their care plans."

# THE IMAGINATION IS THE GOLDEN PATHWAY TO EVERYWHERE

**D**uring lockdown the group launched an engaging and educational competition for all the children in our care. We invited all budding JK Rowlings, David Walliamses and Julia Donaldsons to write a short story around one of the following themes: Lockdown, Being Happy or My Dream.

The competition not only helped parents and carers by providing the children in their care with a fun and creative project to participate in, but it also offered a solid link to the Ofsted framework on writing and supported the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish writing curriculums. There were 3 categories: 5-7 year olds, 8-11 year olds and 12-16 year olds with a first, second and third place in each category. We had entries from all around the group and were proud of our children and young people for putting their stories out there. One of the judges commented,

*"Every one of the young writers should be congratulated on their efforts. You have done something truly remarkable, even if it didn't result in a prize, you have made yourself just a little bit better, a little bit more interesting, a little bit more brave by committing to paper your thoughts, feelings or imaginings. Keep writing – it is an excellent way of making sense of the world around you and communicating to others."*

HERE IS THE FIRST PLACE WINNER IN THE 8 - 11 YEAR OLD CATEGORY:

## 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, its 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.**

### JUDGE'S COMMENT:

“What made this stand out as 1st place for this category was the powerful message within the plea made by the writer, writing on behalf of those who find themselves 'in care', to anyone involved in their lives: from professionals, to foster families, even their birth families. I was incredibly moved by the emotion the writer conveyed, and yet they didn't reveal lots of personal information; the beauty of the writing is in its instructions, a reminder to all of us that our children and young people do not choose the family they are born into. This piece should don the walls of every service!”



2020 was a year where our lives were turned upside down by the global impact of COVID-19 and we faced new challenges, but also found opportunities for hope amongst the gloom. Here are just a few of the stories from around the group of how our services responded to the first lockdown.

# CARING THROUGH THE PANDEMIC



VILLA FARM

## SCHOOLS IN SUPPORT

38

We were so proud of our schools' response in their local areas to support pupils, and to ensure that the families of those they educate and care for were coping and had enough food. Support came in many forms: providing work to do at home, checking in, helping with questions, signposting support, but the food parcels and supermarket vouchers that were sent to some of the families who were struggling to feed their families, were amongst some of the most important work done in those first months of lockdown.

A member of the education operation team commented

“Our school teams have yet again gone above and beyond for our pupils and their families, and they all deserve heartfelt recognition.”

## CROOKHEY HALL SCHOOL

When colleagues and pupils were informed that their usual enrichment activities had been closed due to Covid-19, instead of being downhearted they found their team spirit and decided to work together to design alternative fun activities. Pupils and staff from all classes and year groups came together to transform the woods into an outdoor Nerf gun arena. Construction and Horticulture pupils built environmentally friendly outdoor shelters, whilst lower school pupils worked on clearing a pathway and making bases and barriers out of used tyres. Staff reported that during such a stressful time, this activity helped the pupils to continue to attend school and made everyone feel so much more positive.



CROOKHEY HALL SCHOOL

One of our parents wrote in to say

“A massive thank you for the support, phone calls, online work, paper work packs and food supplies. You are truly doing an amazing job!”



## WE SAID THANK YOU

Back during the first lockdown, our internal communication systems were awash with so many examples of where our children, young people, adults, foster parents and staff had found ways of saying thank you and showing their support to NHS and keyworkers. Here are just a few:



### Underley Garden

- At Underley Garden School two of our post 16 students created a banner to be displayed in the local hospital so that the nurses and doctors knew their efforts were appreciated. Some of the staff care team also did a charity head shave to raise money for the Royal Lancaster Infirmary A&E department.



THE ORCHARDS



UNDERLEY GARDEN

that arrived at Nottingham city transport! We really appreciate them and best wishes to you all.”

- The children and staff from Hayling Island created this large colourful tribute thanking all the NHS staff and keyworkers in their local area.
- One young person in care with his foster siblings through the National Fostering



HAYLING ISLAND

Agency Southwest, created 50 cards to be sent to people in a local care home who were unable to receive visitors. The home were very grateful for this lovely gesture for their residents who could not see their families.

- Children at Villa Farm made rainbow signs and put them up in their bedroom windows.







## HOME SCHOOLING

Up and down the country, our foster carers valiantly took on the task of home schooling and many were surprised at how much they got out of it as a family. Many told us about building stronger attachments with children and young people, and having time to explore all manner of new or lapsed skills.

ONE OF OUR CARERS SAID:

“ Given the year that children have had, we decided to embrace the time of lockdown and not feel daunted by what laid ahead. We felt that the mental health of our children, particularly in the uncharted times was of the utmost importance. We did what we could educationally, but our focus was also on caring and looking after each other and having some fun. We wanted the memory of lockdown time to be as positive as it could be as it is a bit scary out there at the moment. ”



## FOSTER PARENTS LEAD THE WAY

Undeterred by lockdown, here are just a small selection of some of the ways our foster parents went the extra mile to bring joy and hope.

- A foster parent from Fostering Solutions sang ‘*Something Inside So Strong*’, in his front garden during the coronavirus lockdown to lift people’s spirits. His live stream was watched by around 60,000 people, and a clip his neighbour filmed has reached over 1 million views.
- Dressed in a full Easter Bunny outfit, one of our foster parents (National Fostering Agency Midlands) was driven round their local area in a convertible car, to wave and cheer to the local children.
- One of our carers performed live concerts in his front garden every weekend, raising £2000 for the NHS.
- A Fostering Solutions North West foster parent made and distributed 6000 handmade bags of toiletries to NHS frontline staff and patients.
- A foster parent in the North West was awarded a certificate from the High Sheriff of Greater Manchester and Lord Lieutenant to The Queen, recognising her acts of thoughtfulness and kindness during the pandemic.



# CARING THROUGH

# THE PANDEMIC



## GETTING ACTIVE!

If you had not heard of Joe Wicks before lockdown, then you certainly heard of him during it! He pledged to keep the country moving through his online daily workouts for school-age children, but his sessions became a hit in many families and with adults too.

Many of our foster families took part, our schools often started their day with them, plus the sessions provided a structure to lockdown days and a reason to get up and at it. Foster parents, staff and teachers fed back that it was also a good way of boosting mental health during this time and provided many opportunities for shared fun. A member of staff from one of our homes said, “It really helped our young people to cope with the lockdown.”

JOE HIMSELF SAID ABOUT OUR INVOLVEMENT:

“ Ever since I started as The Body Coach it has been my mission to make people happier and healthier, so to see people getting involved with the workouts and encouraging their families to take part too, it makes me feel totally over the moon. Definitely knowing that I was somehow keeping people motivated and mentally healthy during those times, got me through the 23 weeks of PE with Joe. ”

## CREATIVE COMPETITIONS

- As a group, we launched an engaging and educational competition for all the children in our care to participate in during lockdown. To see full article and winner please turn to [page 34](#)
- National Fostering Agency teams ran weekly competition for their fostering families. Children, young people and foster parents were asked to get creative and produce images of rainbows with letters of support to the NHS. Entries were shared and celebrated around the teams. This made everyone feel a collective sense of pride and gratitude for everything our key workers were doing to support the fight of the coronavirus.

“ It was tough to choose the winners from all the amazing entries we received. It was a great competition and really nice to see all the hard work that was put into these pictures. ”

- The Teen Cuisine Competition at the National Fostering Agency South encouraged young people to prepare a meal of their choice and to send in a photo of their dish to be judged and, fingers crossed, win a prize. Better still, it was a way of supporting young people with skills for independence. Foster parents supervised young people whilst they prepared and cooked the meal, allowing the young person to take the lead.





# SPREADING CREATIVITY

Our creative sides had a massive boost during lockdown and we saw this in the responses of our children, young people and adults.

## NOT GERMS!

■ The team at Thorpe House made the most of the spring weather and painted an outside wall with the message, 'We are all different and that's OK,' to inspire young people to be comfortable with who they are.

■ Leah and Scarlett, who are being looked after by Debbie and Kev from the National Fostering Agency Southwest, worked together on this poem and the artwork.

■ A young person in a foster family with Fostering Solutions Wales delivered 'Happy to Help' flyers to members of their local community offering help during lockdown.

■ A young person being looked after by foster parents from Fostering Solutions Wales used a big blackboard to send a message of thanks in support of the 'Clap for Carers'.

■ At Options Roxby, Thorpe, Watermill and Applegate our adults sent their families a 'little pocket hug' during the time they could not visit. The teams received several notes of thanks from families who really appreciated the gesture.

■ Jackie, a member of staff at Fostering Solutions North West used her crafting skills to make personal protective equipment for local NHS services, and inspired others from around the group to do the same.

■ At Options Kinsale, the young people have complex needs and many have severe global development delay without speech or language. They live in for 52 weeks of the year and the lockdown proved extremely difficult for them, as they were unable to have contact with their families or use facilities in the local area as normal. Trips to cafes and other places really help with their emotional regulation as well as improving their social skills. However, staff created an onsite café and an ice cream parlour to try and recreate some of these experiences – it was very successful.

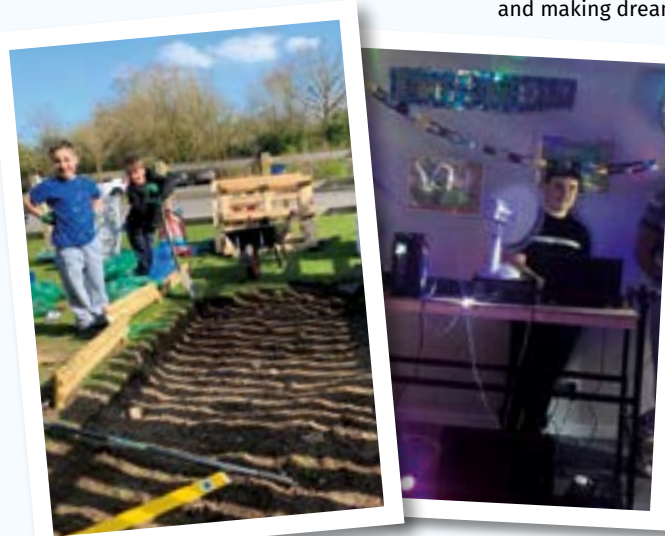


BELMONT HOUSE SCHOOL

■ A pupil at Wenlock School worked with the staff team to create a bowling alley for the school out of recycled items and pallets, allowing other pupils to have an experience they were missing.

■ Options Malvern View came up with all sorts of ways still to deliver the activities their adults were used to doing outside of the home. One that brought a smile to the faces of the residents was the Spa Day, complete with self-care experiences like manicures. It helped to care for both the adults' mental and physical health.

■ Two young people in one of our foster families made up pots of bedding plants and gave to local elderly relatives.



■ Belmont House School stayed open during the Easter holidays to support the work of keyworkers whose children attend their school. They took to the garden, sorting the allotment, painting fences and sorting out the chickens. They used the eggs in some baking too!

“I’m so proud of the lads and I’m proud to be part of the team supporting.”

■ At Aqueduct House it was party time! DJ Ryan ('an awesome young man') organised a disco so that the residents and staff could let off some steam. The young people also enjoyed being creative, baking cakes and making dream catchers. A visiting professional fed back, "I wanted to let you know that [a young person] said that the care he is getting at the moment is amazing- he told me all the lovely things staff are doing with him. It sounds like you are all working so hard."

AQUEDUCT HOUSE  
- DJ RYAN

# CORONA RAP

## POEM BY JOSHUA



The corona virus is all around;  
You should stay in your house.  
Let me know if you need any help.  
Please just stay inside your house.

*We need to stop it spreading;  
So listen up and learn a lesson.  
Stay home and stay indoors,  
Cos the death rate steeply soars.*

More than 10,000 people dying;  
Man, soon I'm gonna start crying.  
I don't want it to take my family.  
This corona virus is scary ugly.

*Nurses wear all the PPE.  
Everyone wash your hands freely;  
Sing for 20 seconds or more,  
So you are not a liability.*

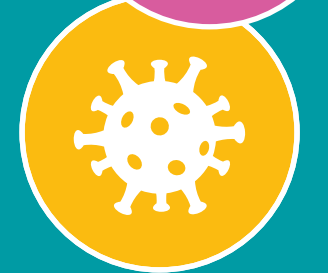
Yeah this virus is really deadly;  
It's the worst thing in history.  
I just want it all to end,  
So I can go outside and see my mates.

*Please let's not pretend;  
Like this virus will never end.  
We all need to make amends,  
Skype and support your family and friends.*

Thank you to the NHS;  
I hope you can soon go and get some rest.  
Make sure all key workers get a test,  
Cos we think you deserve the best.

*I don't want to feel this down;  
I don't want to wear a frown.  
I wanna go back to acting like a clown.  
I see all these businesses going down.*

We are all in this together;  
Let's act like one and save lives.  
When this is done things will be better,  
And this love and humanity survives.





# WE ARE A GREAT PLACE TO WORK

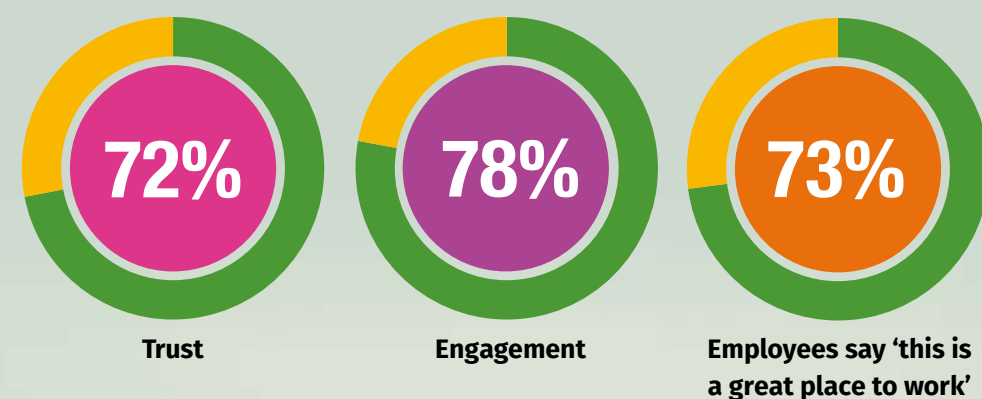


**T**he Trust Index® is the average of the core survey statements asked by Great Place to Work®. The threshold to be considered as a 'Great Place to Work' is 65% and we were thrilled with our score of an amazing 72%, which is phenomenal considering we are working in a global pandemic.

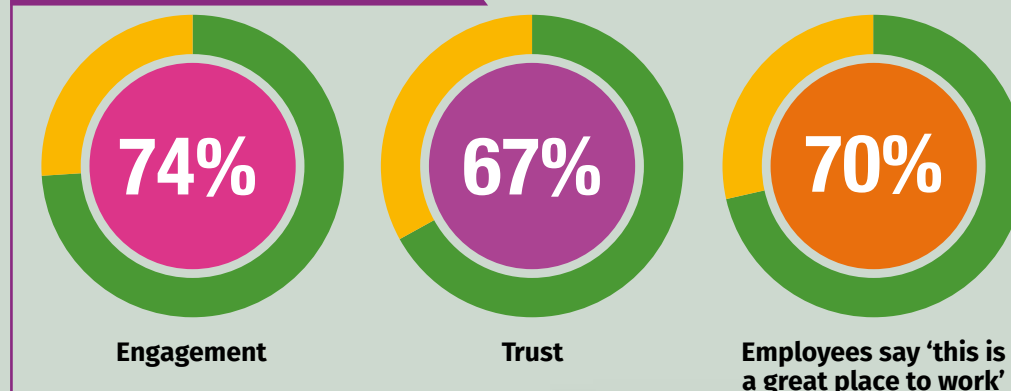
Employee engagement is a key outcome measure including questions on positive outcomes for the group and its employees; pride, loyalty, importance of work, advocacy of the group and willingness to go the extra mile. Driving these outcomes matters to the employee experience, how the group works and the outcomes we deliver for the children, young people and adults we care for and educate.

In September 2020, Outcomes First Group invited employees to give their feedback about what it is like to work for the group. The survey statements focussed on 5 key areas: Credibility, Respect, Fairness, Pride and Camaraderie. Responses to these statements drive an overall Trust Index® score, which tells us about the overall employee experience.

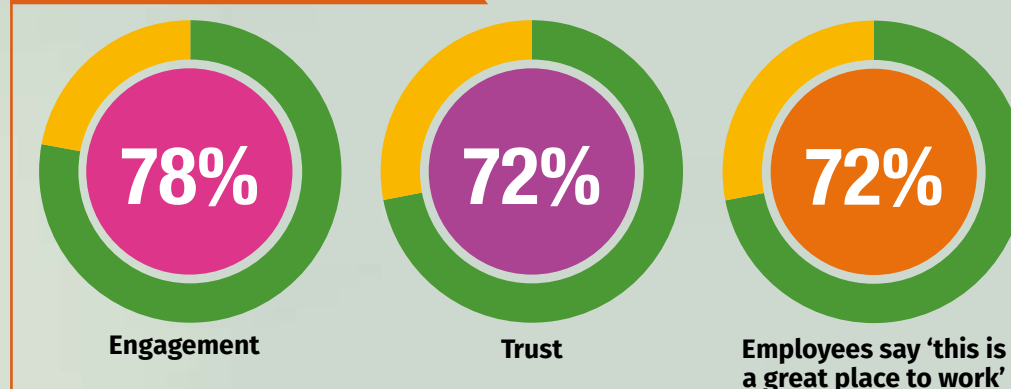
## OUR HEADLINE RESULTS:



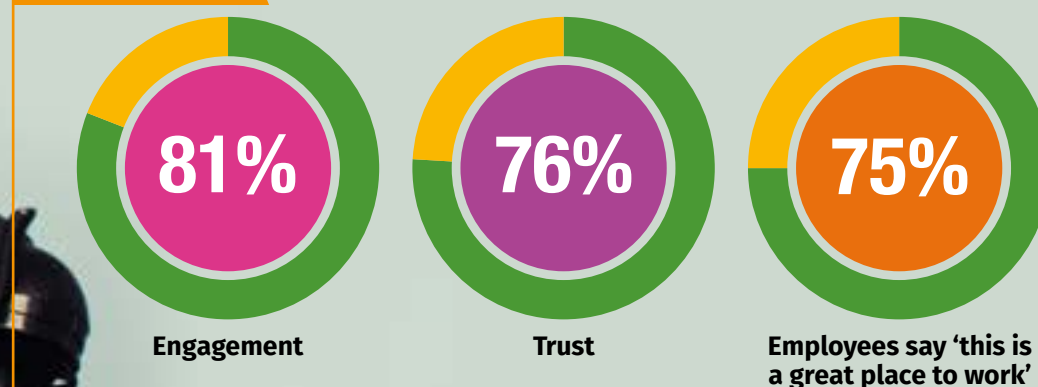
## ADULT CARE & EDUCATION



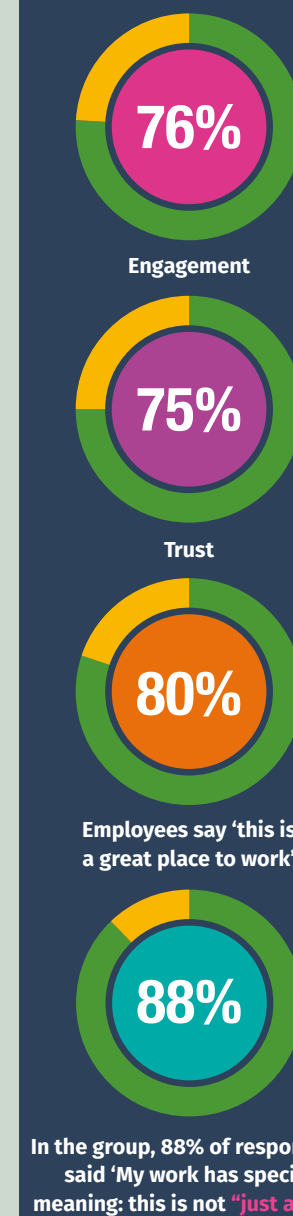
## CHILD EDUCATION & CARE



## FOSTERING



## CENTRAL SERVICES



In the group, 88% of responders said 'My work has special meaning; this is not "just a job"'. 45



Taking part in the survey is not just a tick box exercise. It is essential we learn how we can help the group become an even better place to work. The more engaged our employees are then the happier they will be in and out of work; and happy employees are more likely to stay with us and are enthused to do everything with energy and purpose, therefore creating amazing outcomes for themselves and those they educate and care for.



# OUR PRIORITIES FOR 2021

As we continue to focus on delivering the best outcomes for children, young people and adults, we are always looking to the future and ways to improve the quality of what we do.

## WE WILL:

- As soon as COVID-19 restrictions allow, re-launch our adventure strategy by providing opportunities for young people to take part in physical expeditions with British Exploring Society, and continue online experiences through Wildestan
- Continue the roll out of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award so that all young people have access to the programme, including birth children of foster carers, and report on the outcomes achieved
- Roll out the Quality Network for In-patient Disability Services accreditation process across our adult homes and implement the San Martin Scale quality of life measures to demonstrate outcomes
- Deliver on our three restraint reduction network priorities as pledged in our membership of the network.
- Continue to enhance our clinical model by introducing a group wide approach to tracking outcomes in residential care.

BUILDING INCREDIBLE  
FUTURES  
TOGETHER AND FOREVER



## Our Vision

We will build incredible futures by empowering vulnerable children and young adults in the UK to be happy and make their way in the world.

## Our Mission

Every day we improve the lives of those we educate and look after, their families and communities through a relentless focus on learning and caring.

## Our Values

Open  
& Honest

Be fair and transparent.  
Do the right thing.  
Be respectful.

Dream  
Big

Make positive changes.  
Aspire and Achieve.  
Be ambitious.

Deliver  
Promises

Be accountable.  
Take responsibility.  
Be committed.

Be  
Inclusive

Value diversity.  
Create safe, nurturing environments.  
Care about each other and what we do.

OneTeam

Together we inspire trust, happiness and an infectious passion to accomplish our vision.



BUILDING INCREDIBLE  
**FUTURES**  
TOGETHER AND FOREVER



Atria | Spa Road | Bolton BL1 4AG

01204 522 667

General email | [info@nfagroup.co.uk](mailto:info@nfagroup.co.uk)

National Fostering Group is now part of the Outcomes First Group.  
This data refers to National Fostering Group only.