EDITORIAL

Hello again and welcome to this early autumn edition of the Fostering Issue. I hope you have all had a great summer, in spite of the wet and windy weather, and that you enjoyed the excitement and spectacle of the Olympics.

We have had a really busy summer in the Fostering Service and have been inundated with requests for placements. Many thanks to those of you who helped us out, we really appreciate the efforts you made. If any of you feel you can offer something additional to what you are already doing, please let us know. As usual Colette and her team have been extremely busy with recruitment as you will see from her article, with lots more planned for the coming months. Our Kinship team also report on some exciting developments within their service.

Last but not least we are again celebrating a number of awards. The Fostering Achievement Awards, which this year were held at the Titanic building. It was a wonderful day out for foster carers, their children and their foster children. Belfast Trust foster carers were again very successful at the Foster Carer of the Year Awards and we are also celebrating awards for two carers for their work in the community.

You can read much more about these topics and many others in the magazine. I hope you and your family enjoy it.

Helen Bell

Our Day Out at the Titanic Building

On the 12th May 2012 eighty-five of our foster children received Fostering Achievement Awards at a ceremony in the new Titanic building. These awards were to recognise our children and young people’s achievements in a variety of areas such as academic, social, music and sport.

The Belfast Trust was delighted that so many of our children received awards. I would like to give a very big thank you to Fostering Network who worked with us on this event and to all our staff, carers and young people who contributed.

We were all overawed by the magnificence of the Titanic building. The ceremony was held in the ‘dining room’ of the Titanic and the awards were presented at the foot of the famous staircase. Each of the children and young people had their photograph taken on the staircase. Afterwards the foster carers, their own children and foster children were able to either have a tour of the building or visit W5.

The day reminded us all of the wonderful job that carers do in giving children and young people the security they need to develop their potential. We value the contribution and efforts our carers make in the lives of children and young people and we are extremely proud of the service we offer to you, our carers and your families.

We look forward to working with Fostering Network towards the awards next year, so let’s make it another great success!

Catherine Young

On Saturday 12th May 2012 I attended the new Titanic Quarter building with my foster carer and his friend. I was amazed at the fantastic building. I was very surprised to learn that I would be receiving an award for academic achievement. I also had my photograph taken on the replica of the famous Titanic staircase. This was followed by a very nice meal.

It was a day I will remember for a very long time.

Mohamed (aged 16½)

Fostering Service Wins Second Place in Chairman’s Award

The Fostering Service was runner up in the Chairman’s Award in the Partnership Category, winning a prize of £3,000.

To celebrate this wonderful achievement, a Coffee Morning for foster carers was held on Wednesday, 30.05.12, in Streamvale Farm. Coffee, tea and delicious home made scones were served and well received in the big barn. Mr Pat McCartan, Chairman, attended presenting bouquets of flowers to the eleven ‘Foster Carer of the Year’ nominees.

There was a ‘down to earth’, “back to nature” feel to the morning but the atmosphere was jovial. Foster carers and children then had the opportunity to visit and feed all the farmyard animals and their babies.

A big THANK YOU to Judith Morrow and all the Staff and animals at Streamvale for making us all so welcome - A really lovely morning was had by all!

Colette Quinn

Foster Carer of the Year Awards

Once again foster carers from the Belfast Trust have excelled at the Foster Carer of the Year Awards.

A total of eleven carers from the Belfast Trust were nominated and they were invited to attend an award ceremony at Belfast City Hall on 14th May. Kinship carer May Johnston was runner up and four other carers, Jennifer Burtonwood, Orla McGrory, Laura Moreland and her partner Gerard Comerford received awards for Foster Carer of Distinction.

Many congratulations to the award winners and nominees!
May, June and July were very busy months for publicising fostering in the Belfast Trust. Every effort was made to get as much publicity as possible for our recruitment message ie the need for Belfast people to come forward and foster Belfast children.

Here is a timeline of activities –

07.05.12: Belfast City marathon nine mile walk. Staff walked promoting fostering in the Trust despite the rain and hail stones !!!!!!.  
12.05.12: Fostering Achievement Awards, Titanic. Was there anyone within a two mile radius of the event, who didn’t know about fostering for Belfast Trust? A fantastic event! Well done to all the children and young people on their achievements.  
21.05.12: Fire Engine around Belfast. “It is a Fostering Emergency” was our slogan. The Lord Mayor and the Belfast Giants saw us off from City Hall.  
04.05.12: Fifteen attend Skills to Foster course and six applications are received.  
29.05.12: Westlife Concert offers opportunity to promote fostering for Belfast Trust. Heather and Colette disappointed not to meet Westlife though!  
30.05.12: Coffee Morning with the Chairman at Streamvale.  
18.06.12: New flyer launched, based on Blanche, a Streamvale goose fostering orphaned ducklings.  
20.06.12: Fostering Forum Meeting and it is agreed to ask foster carers to come forward and help with recruitment. Your fostering service needs you to help in the recruitment of foster carers!!  
28.06.12: Recruitment Working Party meet to plan recruitment over the summer (July and August).  
18.06.12: Colette meets Lord Mayor to seek his help in recruiting foster carers.  
18.06.12: Community Telegraph – Fostering offers opportunity to tick one thing off Bucket List.  
26.06.12: Partnership with Belfast Zoo launched with photo shoot in penguin enclosure.  
12.07.12: Belfast Media Group papers carry new ads  
19.07.12: The Stork has arrived in the Belfast Trust! The Belfast Trust needs Belfast people to foster Belfast babies.  
21.07.12: Weekend Magazine (Belfast Telegraph) - The Belfast Trust needs Belfast people to foster Belfast children.  
17.07.12: A Day in the Life in the Belfast Telegraph features Colette.  
31.07.12: Music in the Parks and Rose Week in Lady Dixon Park. The only thing NOT helping the recruitment of foster carers in Belfast is the weather!!!!!

Look out for Activities in the Autumn:  
1. Launch of Partnership with Belfast Giants.  
2. Feile – Carnival, Teddy Bears Picnic.  
4. Reception in the City Hall.  
5. Sons and Daughters Week.  

BELFAST CHILDREN NEED BELFAST PEOPLE TO COME FORWARD AND FOSTER, SO WE IN RECRUITMENT NEED TO ‘DO WHAT IT SAYS ON THE TIN’ RECRUIT, RECRUIT, RECRUIT!

Colette Quinn

Foster Carers Win Awards

Many congratulations to foster carer Anne Rankin who was awarded the British Empire Medal in the Queen’s 2012 Birthday Honors list. This is a reflection of her service to young people in Northern Ireland through her excellent work with BELB Youth Service. Anne has been a foster carer for the Belfast Trust since 2005 and provides a long term placement for a young boy. Anne will attend an event at Hillsborough Castle hosted by the Lord Lieutenant. She will also meet the Queen and be formally presented with the award.

Congratulations also to Bridie McLean who received an award as part of the West Belfast Festival. This award is sponsored by an American benefactor and philanthropist for people who contribute to better lives in their community. Bridie was approved as a foster carer for the Belfast Trust in 1996 and has provided a wide range of foster placements, including emergency, respite, short term and long term. She is currently providing long term placements for two young brothers.

Well done to these carers, not only for their commitment to fostering but also for their service to the wider community.

Sharon Hayward and Cathy Stitt
The Intensive Support Fostering Scheme

Potential foster carers in the greater Belfast area are being urged to consider registering with the Intensive Support Fostering Scheme, specifically designed for adolescents and young people with challenging behaviour. The scheme was launched in 2007 and is aimed at matching foster carers with young people aged between 12 and 18 years old. Developed by the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust in partnership with Extern, the fostering scheme not only offers vast support to the child in question, but also to foster carers and parents.

Due to the support the young person requires within an Intensive Support foster home, foster carers will receive a professional fee of £18,000 a year with other allowances available.

Senior social worker Nadine Kirk revealed the Trust is currently seeking to recruit new foster carers in the greater Belfast area who feel they can offer an adolescent a secure, long-term family environment. Mrs Kirk said: "The children in question run the risk of placement in an intensive children’s home or secure accommodation but we want to offer an alternative to that. These children will have experienced many difficulties in their lives and may have behavioural issues due to traumas in their childhood and detachment from their families. Foster carers and parents who decide to take up this challenge will be offered intense support from us. Foster carers will go through the normal fostering assessment but we feel that what sets this scheme apart is the support offered not just to the child but also the carers."

"We have a clinical psychologist who works with both the foster carers and the children and we offer courses on issues such as therapeutic crisis intervention and applied suicide intervention. The carers benefit from 24 hours a day, seven days a week on-call support. We also undertake regular telephone contact and fortnightly home visits as well as regular placement reviews."

One couple who are currently fostering a 15-year old girl through the scheme said the support offered to them has been invaluable. Bill and Anne Jones (not their real names) urged anyone interested in fostering to research the scheme. As Bill said: "The young person, who is very much part of our family, has been with us for six months and she has enriched our lives so much. Yes there have been challenging situations but we have three grown up children and we went through challenging times with them when they were teenagers, so it’s just normal teenage behaviour to us. The support we received both before she arrived and since then has been invaluable. We haven’t had to call on the 24-hour support since she came to live with us, but we know it is there if we need it."

Bill said any carers considering the Intensive Support Fostering Scheme don’t have to commit, but can benefit, as they did, from initially providing respite. Before committing to long term fostering, Bill and Anne looked after other adolescents for short periods, which Bill said helped them gain confidence and experience as foster parents. Revealing he would recommend the Scheme to anyone interested, he said: "This has been one of the most worthwhile things we have done. It’s so good to see the little changes and she’s already told us ‘don’t think that when I turn 18 that’s the last you’ll see of me. I’ll still come round for my dinner’. Of course we feel like we are helping her, but she has given us so much back in return."

Anyone interested in the Intensive Support Fostering Scheme should call 028 90817807.

Beverley Ringland, Senior Social Worker

A very warm welcome to Beverley Ringland who has joined the Fostering Service as team leader for one of the support and development teams based at the Shankill centre. Beverley started her career over twenty years ago in residential care in Down Lisburn Trust. She worked there for ten years and during that time qualified as a social worker. While she was here Beverley specialised in preparing children for foster care and this sparked her interest in fostering. She moved to fieldwork with adolescents, then began to develop an adolescent fostering scheme. Beverley managed this scheme for children and young people who were particularly difficult to place for about eight years. After this she moved to the charity ‘Action for Children’ where she worked for six years developing its fostering service.

Beverley has a cocker spaniel called Poppy and she enjoys taking her for walks on the beach and in the forest. She is very keen on sport and was lucky enough to get tickets for the Olympics, an experience which she found truly inspirational. Beverley also has her own canoe but states that her bones are trying to tell her that she’s getting too old for canoeing!

Trek to Nepal 2012

While reading the Fostering Network magazine my husband Peter and I saw the “Nepal Trek and Children’s Project 2012” and decided we’d like to give it a go. The aim was to raise £3000 each, plus of course our £300 registration fees each, flights to London, trekking gear and lastly a small matter of getting into shape. Well, let me say now that ignorance is bliss. Peter and I walked everywhere, up every hill and mountain in Ireland, in all weathers. Sometimes we laughed but always we ached!

Raising the money was difficult. We held a night at the races, a pub quiz, bag packing and door collections – you name it we did it and people were unfailingly generous.

At last came the trek. The longest flight we have ever taken from London to Delhi (India), then to Kathmandu (Nepal) then to Pokhara which is where our trek began. The next five days, along with twenty other foster carers, we climbed the Annapurna mountain range, supporting each other, helping each other and sharing the best of craic. The second day we climbed the equivalent of Ben Nevis. Everyone was exhausted. The magnificent backdrop of the Himalayas was behind us and the view of the famous “fishtail” peak was in front of us. It was spectacular. We spent two days working in an orphanage in Pokhara. These were the most deprived children, they had nothing, but they were a joy to be with. We painted the orphanage, fixing it up the best we could and we bought them much needed supplies such as food and fuel, enough for a few months. To all of us it was a humbling experience.

All in all we raised £68,000 much needed funds for Fostering Network. Out of the twenty-two of us only three were from Northern Ireland, so I would say to all of you out there give it a go. You’ll have the time of your life, as it is definitely a once in a life time experience.

Deirdre Rice

THE NEEDS OF OUR SERVICE

Hello to all our foster carers.

I would like to thank you all for you help over the summer, in terms of providing emergency, short term and respite placements for a lot of children and young people. The duty system at Shankill has been very busy over the summer!

At present we have significant numbers of children and young people awaiting both short term and longer term placements. Many of these children are living with their families in the Belfast area. We have especially high numbers of brothers and sisters who should be placed together where possible.

We continue to provide respite for children living at home with their families. Such respite can help maintain a child at home and also provide a much needed break for family members.

If you feel you could provide something extra for fostering, please talk to you supervising social worker.

Thanks again!

Grainne Nelson

DEIRDRE RICE

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Thanks again!

Grainne Nelson
Support Group for Sons and Daughters of Foster Carers

Following the success of the sons and daughters week in October last year, the benefit of a support group for sons and daughters of foster carers was highlighted. A pilot support group was initiated this year and facilitated by June Martin, Kathryn McHugh and Angela Duffy (student). The group ran for four consecutive weeks from Thursday 8th March to Thursday 29th March and was a great success. It was good to meet with some of the sons and daughters of foster carers and hear their views and opinions about the fostering service. Feedback from the children and young people suggested they enjoyed the experience very much as they met new friends and gained a greater understanding of fostering than they had before. The group worked together to produce individual pictures for a practical handbook for other sons and daughters of foster carers, and it is anticipated that the book will be printed and used throughout the Belfast Trust fostering service for recruitment, assessment and training. On the fourth week, we celebrated by treating the kids to ice-skating and bowling and finished off with a well deserved burger and chips. Thanks to all who participated for your hard work!

Angela Duffy

Sons and Daughters Week 2012 will run from Monday 22nd until Friday 26th October. A wide range of activities is being planned for this week, including the ‘old favourites’ – visits to Streamvale Farm and Belfast Zoo, Fire Station tour and Craft Workshop, plus some new initiatives for older children. There will also be a Christmas Card Competition, with the winning entry being printed in time for Christmas.

Letters will be sent out with a full programme of events in mid-September. Please let your supervising social worker know if you have not received a letter and have children of your own aged 0-18 years. We look forward to seeing all you Sons and Daughters in October for a very busy and enjoyable week of events.

June Martin

Memorials

Mr Al McLaughlin
The Fostering Service was sorry to learn of the sad death of Albert McLaughlin, a long-standing foster carer for over fourteen years. Al loved children and enjoyed providing respite for numerous babies and toddlers. During that time he was also a short term carer for four years. Despite his ill health in recent years Al always welcomed children into their home and continued to support his wife in fostering.

We would like to offer our condolences to his wife Eva and their daughters, Amanda, Leanne and Kerry in their sad loss.

Alwyn Hiham, SW

Mr Joe Fisher
Joe and his wife Liz commenced their fostering career in May 2002. After raising their own five children they opened their home and hearts to children in need of care. Joe was diagnosed with cancer in September 2009, but despite this he and Liz continued to make time to care for children. Throughout this period Joe never complained and insisted that he felt ‘fine’.

Joe died in January 2012. He will be sadly missed by all who knew him in the Fostering Service and we would like to offer our condolences to Liz and their children, Grainne, Bríd, Clare, Maura and Christopher.

Cathy Stitt, SW

Finance Update

Firstly I would like to apologise for any problems you incurred in our April and May payments. I appreciate this must have been very inconvenient for you and thank you for your patience while the matter was resolved.

Receiving payments into your bank account is the quickest and most secure method of payment so if you are currently receiving payments by cheque I would strongly recommend you provide us with your bank details in writing or alternatively contact us and we will send you out a form to complete.

The team that deals with all the fostering, adoption, residence order and kinship payments is made up of me (Shannon Johnston), Ann McCorriston and Laura O’Reilly.

Shannon Johnston

Band 4 02890 836032 Mon – Wed
Ann McCorriston
Band 4 02890 836014 Mon – Fri
Laura O’Reilly
Band 4 02890 836036 Tues – Fri

Our section’s e-mail address is Paymentssoserv@belfasttrust.hsni.net if you would prefer to contact us by e-mail.

Please contact us in the first instance if you have any queries on your payments, especially if you think you have been overpaid as it is the policy of Belfast Health & Social Care Trust to recoup any monies which have been overpaid.

Shannon Johnston

Welcome to New Carers

Mr & Mrs Stewart
Ms Cotter & Mr Brown
Mr Daly & Ms McKeown
Mr & Mrs Humphries
Ms Blackburn & Ms Owen
Mr & Mrs Andrews

I would like to wish all our newly appointed foster carers every success in their fostering careers. The Fostering Service provides various training courses and support groups (morning and evening) and I am sure you will avail of these opportunities.

Welcome also to our new Kinship carers. The Kinship team will be in contact with you about upcoming training and their support group.

Marie Jordan, Office Manager

Retirements

A number of foster carers have recently retired. They are:-

Mr & Mrs Duggan
Ms J Burtonwood
Mr J & Mrs B Kelly
Mr & Mrs Keast
Ms P Smyth
Mr Morgan & Ms Menage
Mr & Mrs Naylor
Mr & Mrs McLernon
Rev & Mrs Smyth
Mr & Mrs Tribble

We would like to take the opportunity to thank these carers for their contribution to the Fostering Service over the years and wish them well in their retirement.

WELCOME TO NEW CARERS

Colette Quinn
Senior Social Worker
Josephine McClelland
Foster Carer
Michael Sharkey
Foster Carer
Sharon McNulty
Foster Carer
Grainne Nelson
Senior Practitioner
Lynne Creighton
Social Worker
Jackilene Weatherup
Social Worker
Miriam Beckett
Social Worker
Ruth Wallace
Social Worker
Pamela JenkinS
Social Worker
Lorraine Toner
Principal Social Worker
Helen Bell
Social Worker

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