Family Fun Day

A big shout out to the Fostering Recruitment Team who organised a successful and busy Family Fun Day on Saturday 20 May 2017 at Crawfordsburn Country Park. This event was held as part of Foster Care Fortnight. It was great to see so many foster carers supporting the event and a good opportunity for the general public to find out more about fostering. We hope those who attended enjoyed the day just as much as we did!

BBC Community Life Fostering Appeal #YouCanFoster

In March the BBC appeal aired calling for more people in Northern Ireland to come forward and consider fostering. If you missed it you can catch up using the link provided:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p04vj91n

The South Eastern Trust worked in partnership with The Fostering Network to help create a short film featuring foster carers and young care leavers talking about their personal experiences and the positive impact foster care has had on their lives.

There are currently 2,212 children living in foster care across Northern Ireland. Each of these children need a foster carer who can meet their particular needs. To find the right home for a child the first time means there is a need for at least 170 foster carers to come forward each year across Northern Ireland.

If you would like to find out more on becoming a foster carer please contact our Trust Fostering Recruitment Team on (028) 9127 0672.

Foster Carer Experience

Lynn Shields (Fostering Support Worker) had the privilege of meeting Leona Murphy to talk about her experience as a foster carer of a long term placement in the South Eastern HSC Trust. Leona, a special needs classroom assistant, opened up her home along with her husband Gerard and daughter Aishling to the 12 year old girl almost 6 years ago. Leona reminisced about her childhood growing up in a large family and always knew one day she would foster knowing they had so much to offer. With a warm smile she added “I’m glad we done it. I don’t know what I’d do without her”. Speaking fondly of watching a young child grow into a woman Leona said watching the changes over the years have been really rewarding.

At the beginning Leona recalls the first few months being a challenge given this was an adjustment to family life but can remember thinking “I couldn’t give up on a child, it has to come right”. Leona describes the young girl as a ‘character’ who is very much part of their family and states “We didn’t just foster her, my whole family did”, referring to the involvement of her extended family.

Leona kindly shared the advice she would have for others thinking of fostering advising “don’t be afraid to foster and stick at it”. Leona once thought she couldn’t foster as she had a full time job so suggests don’t rule yourself out before you’ve even started. Feeling always supported by her Supervising Social Worker Noreen Cunningham who has been ‘Amazing’ bringing consistency and getting to know both the child and family so well has also been a bonus.

Having the pleasure to meet the young girl before leaving it was clear she felt at home arriving home from school throwing her school bag down with a big smile on her face laughing and joking. The young girl said “I love living here. I feel safe”.

Finally, Leona finished by saying “fostering keeps us young and I enjoy being kept busy” being ever so thankful for the support from both her husband and daughter.
Foster Carers Achievements

An awards ceremony took place on Saturday 13 May 2017 in the Hilton Hotel Belfast to recognise the amazing contribution that Foster Carers make to young people’s lives in Northern Ireland.

The South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust are proud to announce that two of our Foster Carers were awarded in this ceremony for the great work and positive impact they have on the children and young people in their care.

The Foster Carer of Distinction Award was presented to Bridie and Patrick Bertenshaw from Bangor who have been fostering for about 10 years after becoming foster carers for a little girl who was friendly with one of their children. Messina, who is now in her twenties, still lives with Bridie and Patrick and says she has never felt as if she is fostered, it feels like her own home, as if she has always been there. Bridie reinforced this by saying “this is her home until she gets one of her own and we are her family”.

A Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Gerard and Marion Lennon from Ardglass who have been fostering for the South Eastern Trust for 25 years and were nominated by their foster daughter, Chloe. They have incredible energy and an immense capacity for caring. As well as having six children, Marion worked in a special needs school and Gerard is a teacher. They credit social worker Doreen Halliday with encouraging them to become foster carers and in supporting their fostered daughter Chloe told us they have also, for the last 10 years, been caring for three adults with special needs and Gerard’s brother. Chloe said “Mum and dad have given life and opportunity to people from all walks of life; they have weathered many storms and give their home so openly. They are truly an inspiration”.

‘Fostering in a Digital World’ App Regional Launch

The launch of a new Health and Social Care (HSC) App for HSC foster carers, ‘Fostering in a Digital World’, the first of its kind in Northern Ireland was held on Wednesday 26th April 2017.

The App uses an innovative platform that has been developed specifically for and with HSC foster carers across the South Eastern HSC Trust and in partnership with the INEQE Group. It has been available to foster carers in South Eastern HSC Trust since November 2016 and is now rolled out regionally to the other four Health and Social Care Trusts (Belfast, Southern, Northern and Western). It is currently available for download from Android and Apple stores for all HSC foster carers.

The launch took place in Parliament Buildings which Chief Social Work Officer, Seán Holland, welcomed the production and roll-out of the App, saying, “The design is impressive. While I welcome the training, support and advice it provides to foster carers in how to keep children safe in an on-line world, one of its key strengths is the guidance and advice it provides on the language required to aid discussion and engagement with children and young people - in other words, to be able to talk their language. I am hopeful that foster carers will be find it useful, will be empowered by it and that children will be kept safer on-line as a result of it.”

South Eastern HSC Trust manager, Brendan Whittle commented, “We know that for our foster carers, looking after young people, especially teenagers, isn’t always easy and it may sometimes be unclear where to turn for advice, especially concerning online safety issues. That’s why the ‘Fostering in a Digital World’ App has been created. It allows foster carers to access Trust procedures at a click of a button on their mobile phone or tablet, for reassurance and advice. It has already proven a vital resource and counts as a training tool for HSC foster carers, who can self-test regularly and a digital certificate is issued on completion of the test.”

Any member of the public can access the public side of the App if they are interested in finding out more about fostering. They will be able to access information and be directed to the Regional Fostering and Adoption Service website.
A big thank you to all the foster carers who have taken the time to attend this year’s training. The number of carers who participated in training increased from last year with 77% of foster carers availing of a range of training provided from both internal staff and external agencies.

The new training booklet is currently in the process of being completed and will be released in summer so make sure you grab a copy to find out what’s on offer over the next year!

If you wish to avail of further information you can contact the Fostering Training Coordinators:

Patricia Mulholland (Mon, Tues, Wed)
(028) 9041 3678  patricia.mulholland@setrust.hscni.net

Joanne Hutchison (Wed, Thurs, Fri)
(028) 9127 0672  joanne.hutchison@setrust.hscni.net

Local Events

Castlewellan Agricultural 50th Anniversary Show
15 July 2017
Castlewellan Forest Park
9.00am - 8.00pm

Airfield Open Day, Newtownards
23 July 2017
Newtownards Airport
10.00am - 4.00pm

Jim & Dr Nick Street Circus Show
12 August 2017
Newcastle Promenade
Two performances: 1.00pm & 2.30pm

Belfast Halloween Monster Mash & Firework Display
29 October 2017
Titanic Slipways, Titanic Quarter

For more information and local events please visit:
http://www.discovernorthernireland.com/events/
Can you work out these Cryptic Television Programmes to be in with a chance of winning a Family Pass to Belfast Giants ice hockey game next season!

A massive thanks to Belfast Live for their kind donation of this generous prize!

The first one has been done for you…

Ancient act on the street = Antiques Roadshow

…can you guess the following programmes…

Highest cog = ?
A labrador on your wrist = ?
Where the chain broke = ?
Double move = ?
Money in the loft = ?
The riches of my mum and dad = ?

To grab that family pass please e-mail your 6 answers to lynn.shields@setrust.hscni.net to have your name added to our prize draw.

Compliments and Complaints?

If you have a compliment or complaint to make you can do so by contacting:

Complaints/Patient Liaison Officer
Lough House
Ards Hospital
Church Street
Newtownards
BT23 4AS
Tel: (028) 9056 1427

To keep up to date with all that’s happening make sure to like South Eastern HSC Trust on Facebook and follow @SETrust on Twitter.