

# adoptionuk

for every adoptive family



## Northern Ireland e-Newsletter November 2018

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### Message from EJ Havlin, Director in Northern Ireland



Welcome to our latest local newsletter, highlighting what members have been participating in and what is planned for the months ahead.

In this issue, we have our support group programme, including news of our annual outing to the Waterfront Pantomime, planned for Saturday 1st December. Details on how to reserve a place below. In addition to our 'Family Day' outing, there are a number of additional activities being hosted, a visit to the Odyssey Pavillion for bowling for the Dads group, an evening at the 'Belfast Giants' for the 'Teens group' in January and plans for a Mum's event due to some funding provided funded from 'Family Friendly' Belfast (geographical restrictions). All details below. Even with our In range of peer support events, we're aware that Christmas can be a difficult time for many adopted children and information is available on our website: [www.adoptionuk.org](http://www.adoptionuk.org)

Our adopter voice input includes an overview of a workshop with Dr Karen Treisman attended by some members in September. Local adopter, Gwen Jones, has provided her thoughts on the event which focussed on using a range of therapeutic approaches when working with traumatised children in the areas of trauma, parenting and attachment. Also, we have an opinion from an 'Inter-country adopter' – Suzanne Bennett, on her family experiences of using the Tessa project.

Finally, a last push for anyone who has a contribution to make to our local survey on the experiences of Concurrent Carers. We are keen to hear the voices of those of you who are, or have been a concurrent carer. [www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/AdoptionUKConcurrency](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/AdoptionUKConcurrency)

Please get in touch if you have any queries, have any suggestions or need some information, and we're always looking for people who will volunteer for media. [Click here](#) to email EJ

Thank you, EJ

## Adoption UK events update



### Family Day to W5

Thank you to everyone who joined us at the amazing W5. A few words from mum Kate...

"Our son had a great time at the W5 event. He struggles interacting with his peers and prefers to play with younger children due to his emotional developmental delay and gross motor problems. When we attend Adoption UK events our son finds it easier to socialise and is more confident when in the company of other adopted children. At W5 he spent all the time playing with 2 boys who he met soon after arrival. They explored W5 and had an amazing time together whilst we spent time talking to their parents. When the event was over they exchanged computer names so they could be friends on Roblox. He also met a girl at an event earlier this year and are still friends online. These events are a great asset to adopted children and we look forward to future events."



## Teens group Drumming workshop by mum Malini...

It was a cold Sunday and the planned afternoon with Adoption UK teens group was a welcome change as we arrived at Mount Stewart. We really did not know what to expect, but we were keen to learn about African drumming, organised by Beyond Skin. The session started with a beautiful walk around Mount Stewart, which gave parents an opportunity to get to know each

other and young people a chance to race ahead to see what they could find or where they could hide! On our return to the warm classroom, we were greeted by Donna, our Ugandan artist. The room was full of African drums of numerous sizes. We soon began to play the drums, making music which sounded remarkably harmonious. We learnt that drumming is very much part of the Ugandan way of communicating and being able to play and even dance was a great experience and one we would never have expected here in Mount Stewart. A fabulous afternoon!

*"I had a good afternoon playing drums because it was great to learn about the Ugandan culture and their type of music. We played lots of rhythms to some music, we danced to some music, we asked questions and learnt about the instruments. It was a fun afternoon and I learnt lots."* Dean 13

## Invitation to Beauty and the Beast

We are delighted to invite you along to our annual Christmas pantomime. This year the pantomime is Beauty and the Beast and will take place at the Waterfront Hall on Saturday 1st December at 1pm.

Due to funding restrictions Adoption UK would welcome a donation of £3 per person towards this event. With the popularity and high demand for tickets, we **CANNOT** offer to extended family members or friends [Click her to book your place](#)



## Support Group News



There are geographically based support groups across NI run by volunteers who are experienced adopters. In addition there are thematic groups for dads, LGBTparents, concurrent carers and single adopters. There are also peer support groups for parents facing extremely challenging circumstances and who meet monthly.

Our programme includes a range of topics that include Mental Health - Caring for the Carers, Narrative Work in the Home, Trouble Shooting School, Equine Therapy and much more. Wesley is calling all Dads and kids to come along and join him and other dads for a fun afternoon bowling in Belfast. The teens group are planning a visit to see the Belfast Giants play so don't miss out!

For full details of the local Support Group programme [click here](#).

## Upcoming Events

### Save the date: Mums' Weekend 22-24 February 2019

Calling all mums in need of a break. The mums organise an annual 'escape' to one of Northern Ireland's lovely spa hotels for good food, excellent company, a little pampering and some precious time to relax. Details of venue and **cost** to follow. Express an interest now by [clicking here](#)

### Adopters Considering a Sibling Group - Saturday 10th November 2018 - Belfast

Thinking about adopting siblings? Wondering about extending your current approval to more than one child? This one-day workshop which is being led by experienced adopters, will consider the benefits for brothers and sisters sharing an adoptive family and the potential challenges for both adopters and children of siblings being placed together.

This training has been generously funded by the Regional Adoption and Fostering Service and is free-of-charge for adoptive families. For further information and to book a place please [click here](#)

### Parenting our Children Training - February/March 2019

TESSA are proposing to deliver two 'Parenting our Children' courses in Antrim and Craigavon.

If you are interested in attending or would like further information please contact Tracey 9077 5211

## National Adoption Week



'Adoption Changes Lives' campaign was launched at the Lough Neagh Discovery Centre, involving Adoption UK, the Regional Adoption and Fostering Service, and the HSCB. The campaign is aimed at celebrating adoption and showcasing real life experiences to encourage more people to consider becoming adopters. It has attracted wide media coverage with Adoption UK participating in local radio and television coverage.

A legal seminar on 'Post Adoption Contact' was hosted in the Bar Library in Belfast co-ordinated by the 'Interagency Childcare & Legal Issues Steering Group', which includes Adoption UK. The seminar provided an opportunity for reflection on the lifelong implications of post adoption contact from the perspectives of children, their adoptive families and families of origin. An overview of relevant case law was provided, an outline of guiding principles that inform practice plus the perspective of an adoptee and an adoptive parent gave the assembled audience of Barristers, Solicitors, Legal Guardians, and Social Workers, some unique insights to help their understanding of the impact of post adoption contact.



Other events included: FASD Seminar with Dr Mukherjee [www.fasdawareni.org](http://www.fasdawareni.org)

## 'Let's Learn Together' training roadshow



The 'Let's Learn Together' training was hosted by a number of schools around N.Ireland during the past 4 weeks. Over 130 attended these free evening workshops hosted in a joint initiative between Adoption UK and the Fostering Network. The training was delivered by our trainers, who are adoptive parents, to audiences who included teachers, classroom assistants, parents, wider family networks, homework club and playgroup staff.

Feedback has included *"I will try not to jump to conclusions about a child and their behaviours - I will try to understand why they're behaving in the way they are and help them find a more appropriate way to deal with their emotions."*

*"I will feel more confident discussing my sons needs in school with teacher and principal."*

## Adopter Voice

### Suzanne (Inter-country adopter with two children)

I am writing as an inter country adoptive parent to share my experience when I availed of the TESSA - Adoption UK project. I would highly recommend TESSA for supporting you and your family. There is support available for both parents and children.

To access the service the first stage is filling in a referral form from the webpage and then a representative from TESSA will visit you and discuss how they can best meet the needs of you and your family. As parents you can attend courses, receive counselling or get some stress relief therapies eg. Reflexology. Your children can get support through art therapy, music therapy or drama (I have only mentioned a few of the many activities/services available, and some are available to your family to experience together).

The professionals you are dealing with are well qualified and extremely helpful and understanding. On a personal level, I would recommend allowing TESSA to talk to your children's teachers at school. My experience is that the staff really benefit from the schools training as the knowledge shared is invaluable and school staff very often have little or no experience in the area of educating a child who is adopted and may have experienced trauma.

It is very rarely you are have a chance to access a free service as an adoptive family and I would advise anyone in this position to contact TESSA. [www.tessani.org](http://www.tessani.org)



### Dr Karen Treisman Workshop attended by adoptive mum Gwen

I thoroughly enjoyed the day spent listening to Dr Karen Treisman. It reinforced many of the ideas and concepts which were explained at the Young Hearts and Minds Conference earlier in the summer.

Spending the day focusing on the causes and effects of trauma on all of our children and young people with people who truly "get it" is hugely beneficial. Dr Treisman is an excellent communicator and the picture that will stay in my memory is of the 'Parenting Patchwork'. As we filled the 'Quilt' with all the blocks a child needs, then stripped off each block that was not available to the child leaving an almost blank patchwork, it was devastating. A very visual portrayal of the relational poverty experienced.

Overall the day was very useful, I wished that I could have been there with my teenager and that at some time in the future I will have a chance to hear Dr Treisman again.

## Special Educational Needs Advice Centre



Adoption UK spoke at a recent SENAC conference on the 'Impact of Trauma on Care-Experienced', providing an overview of the 'Bridging the Gap' report. Giving adopted children an equal chance in education. Other conference speakers included Sheila Lavery speaking about the TESSA project schools work and Louise Bomber speaking about the human bridge towards recovery - settling to learn.

The Special Educational Needs Advice Centre (SENAC) provides free, independent advice, information and advocacy to parents/carers of children and young people with special needs and learning difficulties in Northern Ireland. The service includes a confidential advice-line and an advocacy service and Tribunal advice and representation.

SENAC work to get appropriate educational provision for children and support parents through the complexities and legalities of the SEN statutory framework. They can help with understanding the system, IEPs, annual reviews, transition to secondary school and where suitable attend meetings and assist in developing a plan that will address the child's specific educational needs. T 9097 5779 [www.senac.co.uk](http://www.senac.co.uk)

## Department of Health - Report: Children Adopted from Care in Northern Ireland 2017/18

This annual publication details the statistical information relating to children adopted from care in N.Ireland during 2017/18. It shows that during the year 84 children were adopted from care, the average age of children at the time of adoption was 4 years 2 months (3 months younger than the previous year), and the average length of time for a child to be adopted was 3 years 2 months (2 months longer than previous year & 3 months longer than the year before).

[www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/children-adopted-care-northern-ireland-201718](http://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/children-adopted-care-northern-ireland-201718)

Other news...

## Thank you...

Adoption UK were delighted to be nominated by local member Brian as one of the charities to benefit from the NI Fire and Rescue Service Charity Car Wash along with Air Ambulance NI and the Fire Fighter Charity.

We would like to say a huge thank you to all the Omagh Firefighters for their fundraising support.



We are delighted to announce Wesley Graham has joined the Adoption UK Trustee Board, representing Northern Ireland. Many of you may recognise Wesley from his volunteering work with Adoption UK. Wesley coordinates the North Down and Dads group and is also Chair of the NI Advisory group.

Wesley has a wealth of knowledge and experience as an adoptive dad and from his professional background as a Senior Commissioner within the Health & Social Care Board. Wesley is also an independent member of his local Trust Adoption Panel.

## Fond Farewell

Since the last newsletter we have said a fond farewell to Anne Lakin, Volunteer Coordinator. We are grateful to all of Anne's work during the past five years and wish her best of luck in her new Airbnb endeavours.



## Contact us

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