

Committee: **Corporate Parenting Panel**  
Date: **13 July 2012**  
Title of Report: **Annual Report of the East Sussex Foster Care Association**  
By: **Director of Children's Services**  
Purpose of Report: **To present the Annual Report of the East Sussex Foster Care Association**

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**Recommendation:**

**The Panel is recommended to note the Report**

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**1. Financial Appraisal**

1.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

**2. Supporting Information**

2.1 The Annual Report of the East Sussex Foster Care Association is attached at Appendix 1.

**3. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation**

3.1 The Panel is recommended to note the Annual Report.

MATT DUNKLEY  
Director of Children's Services

Local Members: All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None



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## **East Sussex Foster Care Association**

### **Report to Corporate Parenting Panel on Activities and Aspirations**

#### **Introduction**

The past year has witnessed significant actions and progress in the fulfilment of our objective to 'build brighter futures' for the children in our collective care. We have staged numerous events for children in care including a Christmas party, pantomime and activity/adventure weekends to PGL camps. Recognising the critical role that birth/adopted children undertake in welcoming cared for children into their homes and 'sharing their parents' (and possessions!) we have also included birth/adopted children in many of the events.

We also seek to enhance the professionalism of foster carers and have recently staged a conference attended by 270 delegates on the subject of managing worrying and challenging behaviours. The feedback from delegates was exceptionally positive and we are considering further like events for next year.

Of the total 620 children in care we have reached out to approximately 220 in the events we have staged, a reflection of our funding limitations. Whilst we have successfully bid for £9,996 from 'BBC Children in Need' to organise further PGL weekends this year our inability to reach out to a greater number of children is a reflection of the difficulties we face in the current economic climate. We are grateful for the support provided by Children's Services in covering our administrative costs and requirements, without which we would struggle to function.

Finally I reported last year on our wish to raise our profile with the appointment of a patron and I am pleased to confirm that Jayne Torvill has now been appointed. She has indicated her willingness to become an active patron and will be staging skating events for our cared for children shortly.

The report details below are provided as a comprehensive historical summary of our actions and plans for reference purposes if required and are not suggested as necessary reading in their totality.

#### **Fred Livings**

**Chairman, ESFCA**

**July 2012**

## **Overview: Building Brighter Futures**

East Sussex Foster Care Association (ESFCA) is an independent charity run by foster carers for foster carers and their families, including children in care and the birth or adopted children of foster carers. The charity was launched in March 1993 in response to the needs of the children/young people in local authority care across East Sussex and the demands this placed on their foster families. Since launch volunteers have developed a range of support, advice, advocacy and training services together with many memorable activities for their fellow carers, families and the children in care throughout East Sussex.

Approximately 620 children are in care in East Sussex, most of which are placed with the 256 families who are members of ESFCA. The majority of the children in our care have experienced some form of abuse/neglect. A significant number have been physically or sexually abused, others have experienced birth parents struggling with alcohol and substance misuse. Many have suffered severe neglect or witnessed extreme domestic violence. We are keen to show these vulnerable children and young people that by offering help, support, guidance and education we can work together in 'Building Brighter Futures'.

Whilst we are independent of the local authority we work closely with social services to ensure that foster carers are prepared and very well trained for the demanding role of fostering. Our intention is to ensure foster carers are professionally prepared for the challenges of fostering and in this way ensure the best possible outcome for children in care. In recognition that fostering is a whole family concern and not just the province of 'mum and dad' we are addressing in concert with the local authority the needs of birth/adopted children in their vital role of welcoming foster children into their home.

Our overall aspiration is to make a positive change to the lives of children in care and create special memories and experiences that will be life lasting and life changing. In so doing we will fulfil our aspiration to 'Build Brighter Futures'.

## **Detailed Summary of activities and events organised by ESFCA**

### **1. Residential trips for children in the care of East Sussex ie Looked after Children (LAC)**

Each year we run two LAC residential trips for primary and secondary age children. This comprises 25 LAC per trip, 12 adults including Social workers, LAC managers, foster carers and placement support workers. The aim is to build confidence and self esteem, as well as build a positive relationship with social workers. It also breaks the isolation for LAC and gives them the opportunity to try new sporting activities. This also provides desperately needed respite to foster carers.

### **2. Residential trips for the birth and adopted children of carers i.e Children who Foster (CwF)**

Every year we take 60 CwF and 10 adult helpers including social workers from the fostering team. We organise a 3 day residential trip to a PGL adventure holiday. The residential is open to children and young people aged seven years upwards. The purpose of the trip is to recognise the work that children and young people do for fostering. It is our way of saying 'thank you' for the often-unrecognised contribution that this group of youngsters brings to fostering.

There are many different activities for the young people to take part in. These include abseiling, archery, climbing, trampoline, fencing, canoeing, bridge building BMX course, high ropes and aero-ball. There are also many team activities including Jacobs's ladder, Dragon Quest and Sensory trail. The aim of this residential is to allow them to have fun, work as a team and build relationships. Evening entertainment is also organised.

### **3. Suits and CV's 'Are you ready for success'**

We have now run three of these courses. They run over two days and we use an external company who provide training to help LAC attend interviews and produce a CV. Once the LAC has identified their career aspiration we try and invite local business people who are in this field of work. They provide mock interviews for LAC and give some insight into what the work involves.

Once the LAC has completed the course, they are given £100 to buy a suit to enable them to attend an interview. Each course has 15 LAC attending (45 in total over 3 courses)

### **4. Inspiration Project – X factor**

We wanted to inspire LAC that if they had a dream and worked hard, they could achieve. We achieved this through the X factor. We decided that

the contestants on the show could be role models as they had worked hard and achieved their goal.

During 2008 and 2009, we purchased 200 tickets per year to take LAC to the X factor in Brighton, We worked with Simon Cowell's PR company (SYCO TV) and arranged for all the LAC to go back stage and meet the stars. A truly memorable experience for all involved.

#### 5. Bin the Black Sack – Luggage

We have provided in excess of 200 suitcases for LAC. We also purchased 50 luggage holders that are placed in duty teams so that when a child is removed from home their belongings are placed in proper luggage and not black bin liners. This has led to acknowledgement by the current Children's Minister (copy letters in appendix).

#### 6. I.T at home (Computers)

We have received funding to supply 30 brand new computer systems including software and printers to be placed in foster carers home for the use of LAC. This is clearly to encourage and support learning.

More recently we have strengthened our relationships with Sussex and Brighton University and have negotiated the donation of their old computers. We upgrade the equipment and give these to LAC. We have around 50 of these computers currently supplied to LAC.

#### 7. Independent support to foster carers through allegations/standard of care issues.

Where foster carers are subject to an allegation we offer support through the engagement of an independent consultant to assist them in what can be a traumatic process.

#### 8. Surgeries

ESFCA facilitates monthly surgeries for foster carers who have issues or concerns regarding their LAC. These surgeries are held with senior management from the Fostering Service. The intent is to fast track difficulties and prevent complaints escalating. This has also helped identify areas of typical concern where themes may become prevalent.

#### 9. Christmas Parties

In December we offer Christmas parties for LAC and CwF with a visit from Santa. Entertainment and refreshment are on offer and up to 100 children benefit from this experience.



## 10. Pantomime

We aim to obtain 200 tickets (and invariably succeed) for foster families to visit the Devonshire Theatre to see a pantomime. For a lot of LAC, this is their first experience of a live production.

## 11. Annual Conference: Historical perspective

We stage a conference every year as a way of raising the professionalism and awareness of carers and social workers and to give our members the opportunity to network and socialise. We often secure speakers who offer contemporary and relevant information to assist foster carers and all involved in the team around the child to address their particular needs. During the few years our conference activities can be summarised as follows;

- Healing Parents: presented by Michael Orleans and Terry Levy.

This was a 2 day conference attended by 457 delegates. These included adoptive parents, foster carers, social workers, paediatricians, educational psychologists, and teaching professionals. The aim of the conference was to equip all with current knowledge on how to begin the healing process.

- Attachment in Action: presented by Dr Dan Hughes

This was a 1 day conference attended by 363 delegates. Dr Hughes presented an introduction to his model of Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy and his use of PLACE, Playfulness, Love, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy.

- Challenging behaviour from Toddlers to Teens: presented by Dr Margot Sunderland

This was our most recent 1 day conference attend by 270 delegates. Dr Sunderland presented a contemporary approach to challenging behaviours by the use of empathy.

## 12. Work with OFSTED

In the last 3 years we have supported the fostering service OFSTED inspections which has assisted in the acknowledgement that the local authority is recognised as providing an outstanding service.

## 13. Survey of contact arrangements with birth families for LAC.

In recognition of many carers reporting that contact arrangements as determined in the family courts were not always beneficial to LAC we have recently commissioned a survey of carer's experiences. This was to provide an empirical view of the realities and consequence of current

contact arrangements for their LAC. Our findings appear in the appendix and we will be seeking an audience with senior East Sussex judiciary to apprise them of the realities of some contact arrangements and seek to influence their thinking on future arrangements.

#### 14. Direct work with Children who Foster (CwF)

CwF have recently come into focus for us and we initiated a survey and report on their views of fostering from independent consultants. As a consequence of this review we are aiming to equip, train and support CwF for their role in welcoming LAC into their family. We are also recognising their essential role by the provision of events and have recently taken 25 CwF to Knockhatch adventure park and will do so again this month with the kind assistance of Beachy Head Rotary Club. The training we will provide will include; separation and loss, confidentiality, dealing with aggression and violence and why LAC behave in certain ways. This work is now underway.

#### 15. Fundraising

Our fundraising initiatives include bids to various charitable organisations and in this regard we have recently secured £9,996 from BBC Children in Need to provide for the 2 PGL weekends for LAC mentioned previously. We also undertake sponsored walks, shake buckets in shopping centres, will be taking part in the Eastbourne carnival et al. However in the current economic climate the sourcing of funds remains a serious challenge to our aspirations. We are however fortunate in the support we receive from East Sussex County Council which covers our operating costs and administrative requirements.

#### 16. Website

Our website [www.eastsussexfca.org](http://www.eastsussexfca.org) apprises members of current events and topics and is supplemented by the publication of quarterly news letters.



East Sussex Foster Care Association

# **“BUILDING BRIGHTER FUTURES” PROGRAMME**

## **ACTION PLAN**

**1 April 2009 to 31 March 2014**

(last updated following 28 June 2010 Full Association Meeting)

# Year One - Actions for Period: 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010

## Overall Objectives for Year One:

1. Finalise the new structure and all policies and procedures relating to its effective and efficient governance.
2. Secure funding for staff salaries and projects for this year and thereafter.
3. Deliver the projects below and report back to funders and three stakeholder groups on outcomes and outputs using sound evaluation and reporting processes.

NB: Shaded areas depict achieved Actions.

Action No.	Action Summary	Financial Implications/ Funding Reqd.	Funding Source(s)	Working Group(s)/ Individuals Involved/ Staff Involvement	Review Date	Delivery Date
<b>Governance</b>						
1.G	Finalise and implement new structure and governance procedures and terms of reference	N/A	N/A	Governing Body	March	April
2.G	Review the following existing policies, procedures and Operational Guidelines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Protection Policy (completed)</li> <li>• Memorandum of Articles</li> <li>• Articles of Association</li> </ul>	N/A	N/A	Governing Body/Co. Secretary	May	October
3.G	Produce the following Policies and Procedures for the effective and efficient running of ESFCA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health and Safety Policy</li> <li>• Equal Opportunities Statement</li> <li>• Funding Protocol</li> <li>• Finance Protocol</li> </ul>	N/A	N/A	Governing Body/HR Working Group	May	Nov
4.G	Undertake review of current staffing. Assess future staffing needs and source funders as appropriate.	TBA	Wates Lottery ESCC	Governing Body/HR Working Group	April	Sept Agreed for Nov
5.G	Election/re-election of Governing Body members and roles	N/A	N/A	Governing Body/Co. Secretary	June	Sept
6.G	Produce and distribute Annual Report	£300	TBA	Governing Body/Events & Communications WG/SDM	May October	Nov

7.G	Produce final accounts for Companies House and funders	£200	TBA	Treasurer/Finance WG	April	June
<b><i>Children in Care</i></b>						
1.CiC	“Are You Ready for Success” – Workshop for Care Leavers Volunteers at 11/5/09 Meeting – Sandie, Kathy, Ben, Graham.	£2500	TBA	Events & Communications WG/SDM	TBA	TBA
2.CiC	Take 25 Young People Aged 11 to 17 on Residential PGL with 12 adult helpers (venue Little Canada, Isle of Wight)	£5000	TBA	Events & Communications WG/SDM	June	21-23 August
3.CiC	Take further 25 Young People Aged 7 to 11 on Residential PGL with 12 adult helpers (venue Windmill Hill, Sussex)	£5000	TBA	Events & Communications WG/SDM	August	4-6 Sept
4.CiC	Arrange trip to Monkey Bizness for Under 5’s	£150	Received	Admin Officer	Jan 2010	Feb 2010
5.CiC	“Project IT @Home” - Provide 6 new Computer Systems, maintain and upgrade existing machines.	£325	Raffle at Annual Conf.	C Thornton	Ongoing	Ongoing till March 2010.
6.CiC	‘Bin the Black Sacks’ - Provide Quality Luggage when entering, moving and leaving care	N/A due to insufficient in storage	-----	Admin Officer	Ongoing	Ongoing
7.CiC	Offer Lego Land tickets for disabled children and under five’s	£500	Received	Admin Officer/SDM	June/Sept	Summer
8.CiC	Arrange trip for disabled children to Hindleap Warren	£4000	Received	C Thornton taking lead with Jackie Hoadley	June/Sept	Oct
<b><i>Children who Foster</i></b>						
1.CwC	Take 60 Young People on Residential PGL Aged 7 upwards (venue Windmill Hill, Sussex)	£6000	Children in Need, unrestricted funds YOP Fund	SDM/Events & Communications WG	June/Sept	23-25 Oct
2.CwC	Take 40 Young People Grease and Ice –skating/pizza	£2450	YOF	SDM/AO/	TBA	TBA
<b><i>Foster Carers</i></b>						
1.FC	Annual Conference	£4000	ESCC Core Funding	Events & Communications WG/Gov Body	April	June
2.FC	Access to Monthly Surgeries with Departmental Management	N/A	N/A	Admin Officer	Monthly	Monthly
3.FC	Access to Independent Allegations Worker as necessary	£10000	ESCC	SDM/Co. Secretary	Ongoing	Ongoing

4.FC	Commence preparations for 1 or 2 day Seminar for 2010, Sussex National Golf Club Venue	?				
<b><i>Combined CiC/CwF/Foster Carers Projects</i></b>						
2.All	Annual Xmas Party and Bowling Event NOT GOING AHEAD THIS YEAR DUE TO INSUFFICIENT FUNDING	£1200	Local Charities	Events & Communications WG	June/Sept	December
3.All	Annual Pantomime Event (200 tickets)	£1300	TBA Carer Contribution	Events & Communications WG	June/Sept	January

End of Year One

# Year Two - Actions for Period: 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011

## Overall Objectives for Year Two:

1. Review the effectiveness of the new structure; operational procedures and revise as appropriate.
2. Secure further funding for all projects and explore future funding sources to aid its future development and expansion via a large bid.
3. Deliver the projects below and report back to funders and three stakeholders.
4. Increase our support to CwF by way of workshops, support groups and training to help deal with separation and loss

Action No.	Action Summary	Financial Implications/ Funding Req'd.	Funding Source(s)	Working Group(s)/ Accountable Trustee/s/	Review Date	Delivery Date
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## Governance

1.G	Evaluate structure and operational procedures.	N/A	N/A	Trustees / Tina D	January 2010 October 2010	June 2010 Ongoing
2.G	Review this Action Plans remaining 4 Year Programme	N/A	N/A	Trustees / Tina D	January 2010	February 2010 Ongoing
3.G	Review Funding Timetable/Resource Needs for Year 2, 3, 4 and 5 and agree written funding plan of action	N/A	N/A	Trustees/TinaH/TinaD	January 2010 October 2010	February 2010 Ongoing
4.G	Election/re-election of Governing Body members and roles. Re-election of Chair – AGM 18 October 2010	£100 (cost of AGM)	N/A	Trustees/Co. Secretary Chris/Susanne	April 2010	Oct 2010
5.G	Produce and distribute Annual Report	£300	Core Funding	Trustees/Sandie	September 2010	November 2011
6.G	Produce the following HR 'Good Governance Documents' for the effective and efficient running of the ESFCA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health and Safety Policy</li> <li>• Equal Opportunities Statement</li> <li>• Finance Protocol</li> </ul>	N/A	N/A	Trustees - HR Group }-Gillian/Chris/TinaD } }-Denise/Ben/Martin }	March 2010	May 2010
7.G	Undertake review of current staffing. Assess future staffing needs and source funders as appropriate.	TBA	TBA Lottery ESCC	Trustees/HR Group – Gillian/Chris/in consultation with Tina H/Sandie	February 2010 September 2010	March 2010 and Sept 2010 ongoing
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## ***Children in Care***

1.G	"Are You Ready for Success"	£2500	TBA	Tina H/Heather with at least two Trustees participation	January 10	2010 - TBA
2.CiC	Take 50 Young People on Residential PGL – DATES: 7-11 Years – 16/17/18 Aug - 11 – 18 Years 22/23/24 October	£12000	TBA	Tina H/Heather with Trustee participation – Ann, Susanne, Martin	March 10	August 10
4.CiC	'Bin the Black Sacks' - Provide Quality Luggage when entering, moving and leaving care	£1000	-----	Trustees and Committee members	January 2010 September	March 2010 Ongoing

## ***Children who Foster***

1.CwF	Take 60 Young People on Residential PGL DATES: 30/31/1 July/Aug	£6000	TBA	Tina H/Heather with Trustee participation – Ann./Susanne/Martin	March 2010	July 2010
2.CwF	Take 50 Young People on Day Trip (TBC)	£3000	TBA	Tina H/Heather	April 2010	TBA
3.CwF	CwC To run workshop at our Annual Conference	-----	TBA	Chris/Tina D/All Assoc members	Jan 2010 March 2010	June 2010
4.CwF	Training on Separation and Loss – CAMHS	-----	ESCC	Tina H/Dept	February 2010 June 2010	March 2011
5.CwF	On-going Support / workshops run by Hiles-Hawley Partnership	£3000	Awards for All, YOF	Tina H/Dept	March 2010	March 2011

## ***Foster Carers***

1.FC	Annual Conference	£4500	ESCC Core Funding	Ann/Chris/Penny/Tina D/Heather All trustees	June 2010	TBA 2011
2.FC	Access to Monthly Surgeries with Departmental Management DATES 2010: 21 Jan; 18 Feb; 18 March; 22 April; 20 May; 17 June; 22 July; 19 <sup>th</sup> Aug; 16 Sept; 21 Oct; 18 Nov; 16 Dec.	N/A	N/A	Ann /Dept	Monthly	Monthly
3.FC	Access to Independent Allegations Worker as necessary	£10000	ESCC	Tina H/Chris	Ongoing	Ongoing
4.FC	Seminar, Sussex National Golf Club	Ticket sales	TBA	Tina H/Chris/Trustees	March/Apr 2010	12 May 2010
5.FC	Working Groups with Children's Services (speakers/meetings) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adoption Process</li> <li>Payments</li> <li>Development and Change</li> </ul>	TBA  21	TBA	Trustees/Steve H/ With participation from Association Members	January/Mar /May/Aug 2010	Ongoing 7

# Year Three - Actions for Period : 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012

## Overall Objectives for Year Three:

1. Secure funding for all its projects and explore future funding sources to aid its future development and expansion.
2. Deliver projects and report back to funders and three stakeholder groups on outcomes and outputs through sound evaluation and reporting processes.
3. Explore commercial arm of ESFCA

Action No.	Action Summary	Financial Implications/Funding Req'd.	Funding Source(s)	Working Group(s)/ Individuals Involved/ Staff Involvement	Review Date	Delivery Date
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## *Governance*

1.G	Review this Action Plans remaining 4 Year Programme	N/A	N/A	Trustees	April	May
2.G	Review Funding Timetable/Resource Needs for year 3, 4 and 5	N/A	N/A	Trustees/HR Working Group		
3.G	Election/re-election of Governing Body members and roles	N/A	N/A	Trustees/Co. Secretary	June	Oct
4.G	Produce and distribute Annual Report	£300	TBA	Trustees/Events & Communications WG/SDM	May	July
5.G	Produce final accounts for Companies House and funders	£250	TBA	Treasurer/Finance Group	April	June

## *Children in Care*

1.CiC	"Are You Ready For Success"	£2700	TBA	Events & Communications WG/SDM	TBA	TBA
2.CiC	Take 25 Young People on Residential PGL	£5500	TBA	Events & Communications WG/SDM	June	August
3.CiC	Arrange trip to Monkey Bizness for Under 5's	£200	TBA	Admin Officer	Jan 2012	Feb 2013
4.CiC	'Bin the Black Sacks'	£400	TBA	Admin Officer	Ongoing	Ongoing

## *Children who Foster*

1.CwF	Take 50 Young People on Residential PGL	£6000	TBA	SDM/Events & Communications WG	Jan 2012	May 2013
2.CwF	Take 50 Young People on Day Trip (TBC)	£2000	TBA	SDM/Events & Communications	TBA	TBA

## ***Foster Carers***

1.FC	Two Day Conference (in place of Annual Conference)	£20000	ESCC Core Funding plus other funders/ticket sales	Events & Communications WG/Gov Body	April	June
2.FC	Access to Monthly Surgeries with Departmental Management	N/A	N/A	Admin Officer	Monthly	Monthly
3.FC	Access to Independent Allegations Worker as necessary	£10000	ESCC	SDM/Co. Secretary	Ongoing	Ongoing

## ***Combined CiC/CwC/Foster Carers Projects***

1.All	Inspirational Project – Xfactor or similar	£3300	TBA	SDM/Admin Officer		
2.All	Annual Xmas Party and Bowling Event	£1300	Local Charity Groups	Events & Communications WG	June	December
3.All	Annual Pantomime Event (200 tickets)	£1300	Local Charity Groups/Carer Contributions	Events & Communications WG	June	December

# Year Four - Actions for Period : 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013

## Overall Objectives for Year Four:

1. To secure funding for all its projects and explore future funding sources to aid its future development and expansion.
2. To deliver the projects below and report back to funders and three stakeholder groups on outcomes and outputs through sound evaluation and reporting processes.
3. To start planning beyond this Five Year Programme into the next

Action No.	Action Summary	Financial Implications/Funding Req.	Funding Source(s)	Working Group(s)/ Individuals Involved/ Staff Involvement	Review Date	Delivery Date
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## Governance

1.G	Review this Action Plans remaining 4 Year Programme	N/A	N/A	Trustees	April	May
2.G	Review Funding Timetable/Resource Needs for year 3, 4 and 5	N/A	N/A	Trustees/HR Group	April	May
3.G	Election/re-election of Governing Body members and roles	N/A	N/A	Trustees/Co. Secretary	June	Oct
4.G	Produce and distribute Annual Report	£350	TBA	Trustees/Events & Communications WG/SDM	May	July
5.G	Produce final accounts for Companies House and funders	£250	TBA	Treasurer/Finance Group	April	June

## Children in Care

1.CiC	"Are You Ready for Success"	£2700	TBA	Events & Communications WG/SDM	TBA	TBA
2.CiC	Take 25 Young People on Residential PGL	£5500	TBA	Events & Communications WG/SDM	June	August
3.CiC	Take further 25 Young People on Residential PGL	£5500	TBA	Events & Communications WG/SDM	August	Oct
4.CiC	'Bin the Black Sacks' - Provide Quality Luggage when entering, moving and leaving care	£400	TBA	Admin Officer	Ongoing	Ongoing

<b><i>Children who Foster</i></b>						
1.CwF	Take 50 Young People on Residential PGL	£6000	TBA	SDM/Events & Communications WG	Jan 2012	May 2013
2.CwF	Take 50 Young People on Day Trip (TBC)	£5000	TBA	SDM/Events & Communications	TBA	TBA
<b><i>Foster Carers</i></b>						
1.FC	Annual Conference	£4100	ESCC Core Funding	Events & Communications WG/Gov Body	April	June
2.FC	Access to Monthly Surgeries with Departmental Management	N/A	N/A	Admin Officer	Monthly	Monthly
3.FC	Access to Independent Allegations Worker as necessary	£10000	ESCC	SDM/Company Secretary	Ongoing	Ongoing
<b><i>Combined CiC/CwC/Foster Carers Projects</i></b>						
1.All	Inspirational Project	£3600	TBA	SDM/Admin Officer		
2.All	Annual Xmas Party and Bowling Event	£1400	Local Charity Groups	Events & Communications WG	June	December
3.All	Annual Pantomime Event (200 tickets)	£1400	Local Charity Groups/Carer Contributions	Events & Communications WG	June	December

# Year Five - Actions for Period : 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014

## Overall Objectives for Year Five:

1. To Secure funding for next phase of ESFCA Programme of Works
2. To Produce Action Plan from 1 April 2014 to 2019
3. To deliver against our core events and activities for Year 2013-14
4. To Evaluate outcomes and outputs of 2009 – 2014 “Building Brighter Futures” Plan

Action No.	Action Summary	Financial Implications/Funding Req.	Funding Source(s)	Working Group(s)/ Individuals Involved/ Staff Involvement	Review Date	Delivery Date
<b><i>Governance</i></b>						
1.G	Review this Action Plans remaining 4 Year Programme	N/A	N/A	Trustees	April	May
2.G	Review Funding Timetable/Resource Needs for year 3, 4 and 5	N/A	N/A	Trustees/HR Group		
3.G	Election/re-election of Governing Body members and roles	N/A	N/A	Trustees/Co. Secretary	June	Oct
4.G	Produce and distribute Annual Report	£350	TBA	Trustees/Events & Communications WG/SDM	May	July
5.G	Produce final accounts for Companies House and potential funders	£300	TBA	Treasurer/Finance Group	April	June
<b><i>Children in Care</i></b>						
1.CiC	Leaving Care – Achieving your Potential Workshop	£2700	TBA	Events & Communications WG/SDM	TBA	TBA
2.CiC	Take 25 Young People on Residential PGL	£5500	TBA	Events & Communications WG/SDM	June	August
3.CiC	‘Bin the Black Sacks’	£400	TBA	Admin Officer	Ongoing	Ongoing

## ***Children who Foster***

1.CwF	Take 50 Young People on Residential PGL	£6500	TBA	SDM/Events & Communications WG	Jan 2012	May 2013
2.CwF	Take 50 Young People on Day Trip (TBC)	£2500	TBA	SDM/Events & Communications	TBA	TBA

## ***Foster Carers***

1.FC	Annual Conference	£4000	ESCC Core Funding	Events & Communications WG/Gov Body	April	June
2.FC	Access to Monthly Surgeries with Departmental Management	N/A	N/A	Admin Officer	Monthly	Monthly
3.FC	Access to Independent Allegations Worker as necessary	£10000	ESCC	SDM/Company Secretary	Ongoing	Ongoing

## ***Combined CiC/CwC/Foster Carers Projects***

1.All	Inspirational Project	£3700	TBA	SDM/Admin Officer		
2.All	Annual Xmas Party and Bowling Event	£1300	Local Charity Groups	Events & Communications WG	June	December
3.All	Annual Pantomime Event (200 tickets)	£1300	Local Charity Groups/Carer Contributions	Events & Communications WG	June	December

End of Five Year “Building Brighter Futures” Programme 2009 - 2014





Company Registered Number 4216137  
Registered Charity Number 1092668

East Sussex Foster Care Association

Report and Unaudited Accounts

31 March 2011

## **East Sussex Foster Care Association Directors' Report**

The directors present their report and accounts for the year ended 31 March 2011.

### **Directors**

The following persons served as directors during the year:

Tina Darby  
Denise Clark - Treasurer  
Ann Holder  
Martin Ensom - Resigned February 2011  
Chris Thornton - Company Secretary  
Fred Livings - Chair  
Sarah Winks  
Susanne Beesley

### **Governing body**

The charity is an incorporated association governed by its memorandum and articles of association, together with its constitution.

### **Object of the charity**

For the benefit of children in the care of foster families, particularly in the county of East Sussex, by provision of, or assistance in the provision of, facilities, advice, advocacy, training and such other services as the trustees shall decide.

### **Decision Making**

The charity is managed by the board of directors which meets on a monthly basis.

### **Chair's Review**

The trustees submit their report together with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31st March 2011.

It has been another very busy and successful year for East Sussex Foster Care Association. As is the case for all charities we rely on donations to fund our many activities and the past year has witnessed the most challenging environment in which to raise funds. We have sought support from varied institutions and are grateful to those who have been able to support our aspirations in a tangible way. I particularly wish to thank Happy Days Charitable Trust who were able to support our theatre trip, Telent who have donated laptop computers for children in care and Tripp luggage who have again supported us with the provision of suitcases to preclude the ignominy of children's possessions being transported in bin liners. In addition the support we receive from East Sussex Social Services is invaluable in allowing us to continue our operations. Whilst immensely grateful for the support the aforementioned (and others) have provided we are struggling to maintain our funding levels in the current economic climate and the Directors will be pursuing new avenues of funding in the current business year to fulfil our goals.

Our annual events have included trips to Windmill Hill and Little Canada Activity Centre's, Christmas pantomime, Christmas party, Theatre trip and the staging of a conference for the benefit of foster carers and other professionals. All of these events are planned to be staged again in the current business year and in particular we will be hosting a conference next year on 16th May, at which Dr Margot Sunderland will be our guest speaker.

## **East Sussex Foster Care Association Directors' Report**

I will conclude by placing on record my sincere thanks to my fellow Directors and committee members for their unstinting commitment to the charity and pay especial thanks to Martin Ensom, who stood down this year. Martin's contributions, in particular the organisation of the Christmas pantomime have been valued by all.

### **Reserves Policy**

The Association is largely dependent on Project based funding for its operation. Since we are a non-profit making charity, in the directors' opinion, our reserves should represent a maximum of £10,000, plus the balance of any Project funding committed across the financial year.

### **Risk Policy**

The major risk faced by the charity is the lack of future funding to enable it to fulfill its activities and meet its underlying costs. The directors continue to seek new sources of funding to mitigate this risk.

### **Small company provisions**

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions in Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

This report was approved by the board on 10 October 2011.

Fred Livings  
Director

**East Sussex Foster Care Association  
Chartered Accountants' Report**

**Chartered Accountants' Report to the Board of Directors  
on the unaudited accounts of East Sussex Foster Care Association**

In accordance with our term of engagement, and in order to assist you to fulfil your duties under the Companies Act 1985, we have compiled the accounts of the company which comprise the Detailed Statement of Activities, the Balance Sheet and the related notes from the accounting records and information and explanations you have given to us.

This report is made to the Company's Board of Directors, as a body, in accordance with the terms of our engagement. Our work has been undertaken so that we might compile the accounts that we have been engaged to compile, report to the Company's Board of Directors that we have done so, and state those matters that we have agreed to state to them in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Company and the Company's Board of Directors, as a body, for our work or for this report.

We have carried out this engagement in accordance with technical guidance issued by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales and have complied with the ethical guidance laid down by the Institute relating to members undertaking the compilation of accounts.

You have acknowledged on the balance sheet as at 31st March 2010 your duty to ensure that the company has kept proper accounting records and to prepare accounts that give a true and fair view under the Companies Act 1985. You consider that the company is exempt from the statutory requirement for an audit for the year.

We have not been instructed to carry out an audit of the accounts. For this reason, we have not verified the accuracy or completeness of the accounting records or information and explanations you have given to us and we do not, therefore, express any opinion on the accounts.

Richard Place & Co  
Chartered Accountants

25 Springdale Way  
Beverley  
East Yorkshire  
HU17 8NU

10/10/2011

**East Sussex Foster Care Association**  
**Detailed Statement of Financial Activities**  
**(including Income and Expenditure Account)**  
**for the year ended 31 March 2011**

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2011	2010
Notes	£	£	£	£
<b>Incoming resources</b>				
Donations	75	1,790	1,865	8,902
Core funding	22,330	4,510	26,840	32,399
Fundraising		39	39	
Grants		14,141	14,141	5,704
Conference costs		6,990	6,990	4,363
Contributions to panto				1,704
Interest	10		10	15
Other income				1,646
<b>Total incoming resources</b>	<b>22,415</b>	<b>27,470</b>	<b>49,885</b>	<b>54,733</b>
<b>Resources expended</b>				
Conference		9,535	9,535	3,113
Accountants fees	504		504	360
Sundries	69		69	
Insurance				819
Conference expenses				2,428
Party and pantomime		3,669	3,669	3,043
General running expenses	654		654	616
Day Trips		240	240	4,830
Holiday project		14,193	14,193	13,252
Luggage purchased		240	240	
Salaries	15,829		15,829	19,189
Staff general expenses	19		19	1,457
Allegations worker		5,010	5,010	2,207
Computer costs		171	171	53
Training	1,500		1,500	
<b>Total resources expended</b>	<b>18,575</b>	<b>33,058</b>	<b>51,633</b>	<b>51,367</b>
<b>Net incoming resources</b>				
<b>Net income for the year</b>	<b>3,840</b>	<b>(5,588)</b>	<b>(1,748)</b>	<b>3,366</b>

**East Sussex Foster Care Association**  
**Balance Sheet**  
**as at 31 March 2011**

	Notes	2011 £	2010 £
<b>Fixed assets</b>			
Tangible assets	3	1	1
<b>Current assets</b>			
Cash at bank and in hand		39,018	40,715
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>	4	(492)	(441)
<b>Net current assets</b>		<u>38,526</u>	<u>40,274</u>
<b>Net assets</b>		<u><u>38,527</u></u>	<u><u>40,275</u></u>
<b>Funds</b>			
Unrestricted	5	17,022	13,182
Restricted	6	21,505	27,093
		<u><u>38,527</u></u>	<u><u>40,275</u></u>

The directors are satisfied that the company is entitled to exemption from the requirement to obtain an audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 and that members have not required the company to obtain an audit in accordance with section 476 of the Act.

The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts.

The accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions in Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

Fred Livings  
 Director  
 Approved by the board on 10 October 2011

**East Sussex Foster Care Association**  
**Notes to the Accounts**  
**for the year ended 31 March 2011**

**1 Accounting policies**

***Basis of preparation***

The accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention and in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (effective April 2008). They follow the recommendations in Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice issued in March 2005 (SORP).

***1(a) Funds***

Unrestricted funds are donations and other incoming resources receivable or generated for the objects of the charity without further specified purpose and are available as general

Restricted funds are to be used for specific purposes as laid down by the donor. Expenditure which meets these criteria is charged to the fund, together with an agreed allocation of management and support costs.

***1(b) Incoming resources***

Voluntary income is received by way of donations and membership fees and is included in full in the Statement of Financial Activities when receivable. The value of services provided by volunteers has not been included.

Grants and incoming resources from charitable activities are recognised in full in the Statement of Financial Activities in the year in which they are receivable.

***1(c) Resources expended***

Resources expended are recognised in the period in which they are incurred. Expenses are described by the nature of the expense, not allocated to a particular activity, in accordance with SORP paragraph 348.

***Depreciation***

Expenditure on individual items of office and computer equipment costing less than £5,000 is written off in the period in which the expenditure is incurred.

**2 Basis of charging expenses**

Expenses are charged in the accounts when paid.

**3 Tangible fixed assets**

	<b>Plant and machinery etc £</b>
<b>Cost</b>	
At 1 April 2010	7,667
At 31 March 2011	<u>7,667</u>
<b>Depreciation</b>	
At 1 April 2010	7,666
At 31 March 2011	<u>7,666</u>
<b>Net book value</b>	
At 31 March 2011	<u>1</u>
At 31 March 2010	<u>1</u>

**East Sussex Foster Care Association**  
**Notes to the Accounts**  
**for the year ended 31 March 2011**

<b>4 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2010</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Other creditors	<u>492</u>	<u>441</u>

<b>5 Unrestricted funds</b>						
	Balance at	Movements in Resources			Balance at	
	1st June	Incoming	Transfer	Outgoing	31st March	<b>2010</b>
	2010	£	£	£	2011	<b>£</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
General fund	<u>13,182</u>	<u>22,415</u>	-	<u>18,575</u>	<u>17,022</u>	<u>11,067</u>

<b>6 Restricted Funds</b>						
	Balance at	Movements in Resources			Balance at	
	1st April	Incoming	Transfer	Outgoing	31st March	<b>2010</b>
	2010	£	£	£	2011	<b>£</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Computers for LACs	1	500		171	330	1
Allegations Worker	8,213	4,510		5,010	7,713	8,213
Party and Pantomime	-	850	1,500	3,669	(1,319)	-
Dan Hughes Conference	2,462	6,990	(160)	9,535	(243)	2,462
Children Who Care	6,284	5,034	(4,122)		7,196	6,284
Disability Holiday	4,884		(1,500)		3,384	4,884
LAC Grant Fund	764	9,586	4,282	14,433	199	764
Leaving Care Project	3,870				3,870	3,870
Luggage for LACs	615			240	375	615
	<u>27,093</u>	<u>27,470</u>	0	<u>33,058</u>	<u>21,505</u>	<u>27,093</u>

<b>7 Analysis of net assets by fund</b>				
	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	<b>2010</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Current assets	17,514	21,505	39,019	40716
Current liabilities	492		492	441
Fund balances	<u>17,022</u>	<u>21,505</u>	<u>38,527</u>	<u>40,275</u>





2010/0102726POTL

**Tim Loughton MP**

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families

Sanctuary Buildings Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT  
tel: 0870 0012345 ministers@education.gsi.gov.uk

Mr Fred Livings  
Chair, East Sussex Foster Care Association  
[esfca@btinternet.com](mailto:esfca@btinternet.com)

21 January 2011

Dear Mr Livings,

Thank you for your letter of 8 December providing me with some information about the 'Bin the Black Sacks' initiative developed by East Sussex Foster Care Association. I would like to apologise for the delay in replying to you.

It was really useful for me to read about this praiseworthy project. The practice of using bin liners to transfer the clothes and belongings of looked after children between placements or when they are coming into care clearly robs these children and young people of dignity and respect. It should not still be happening and I will not be satisfied until it has stopped completely.

To show my support to this cause, I recently attended a 'Bin Bag fashion show' organised by A National Voice which was part of their campaign to abolish this practice and encourage local authorities to provide suitable luggage. As long as children and young people are still reporting that bin bags are being used, I will continue to stress the importance of this issue in public.

Local authorities, as the corporate parents of the children they look after, must ensure suitcases or other suitable bags are available to transport children's belongings with the requisite respect. Apart from purchasing bags and cases directly from suppliers, a further way of ensuring an adequate supply of cases and bags is for local authorities to work with associations such as yours, utilising appropriate expertise to secure support from private sponsors, as you have done with Tripp Luggage. I am sorry that Tripp is not able to assist you further at the present time, but very much hope that you are able to secure sponsorship from others in the near future.

I expect Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members to take responsibility and to make sure that their staff are in no doubt that the use of bin bags is unacceptable, and very much hope that with the help of organisations such as yours we will achieve consistency across all local authorities.

If helpful, I am happy for you to share this letter with others, and also to put it onto your website.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Loughton', with a horizontal line underneath.

**TIM LOUGHTON MP**



East Sussex Foster Care Association

## Contact and its Impact

A survey into the effects of Contact.

### 1. Introduction and Method

East Sussex Foster Care Association is a voluntary group of East Sussex foster carers and all registered carers eligible to become members. The Association is completely independent from the Social Services Department and is a registered charity with approximately 260 members.

The Association is properly constituted and managed by a committee of Trustees, all of whom are foster carers. There are approximately 620 children in care in East Sussex although this number can fluctuate on an almost daily basis.

The ESFCA has frequently been approached by foster carers with concerns relating to contact between children in care and their birth families. Questions were raised at the 2011 ESFCA conference to East Sussex Social Services Department. As a result, ESFCA were approached by Sally Carnie of East Sussex County Council, Social Services Department, with a request to consult with carers to identify the relevant issues and concerns of carers with regard to the effect of such contact upon themselves, their own families and most importantly children who are in the care system.

It is known that there already exists considerable research into the issues surrounding trauma, attachment and loss, however ESFCA were keen to establish the current reality in East Sussex.

A questionnaire was devised and sent to the 260 foster carers in East Sussex. (the population) Rather than asking carers to tick boxes it was decided to ask questions that would stimulate thought and replies. Therefore this was not a simple tick box system and required considerable input from those who undertook to reply. Our thanks must go to those carers who took the time and trouble to reply.

Of the 260 carers there were 73 replies. (the response rate) This represents 28 % of all carers canvassed which is a good statistical proportion compared with many surveys.

The respondents break down as follows:

- Short Term 42
- Permanent 22
- Respite 8

There are several instances of carers having a mixture of roles.

Carers were first asked to provide brief details of themselves, their experience in terms of years of service as a carer, and the number and age range of children currently in care. Providing a name was optional but the vast majority chose to identify themselves and several are prepared to address the judiciary directly with their experiences.

The carer was then asked to feel free to make general additional comments. Many chose to take advantage of this facility and gave valuable insight to their experiences.

The results of the 73 surveys that were completed and returned are as follows. The numbers in brackets refer to the carer's survey number.

#### Notes

The circumstances of all the carers vary. For some, contact presents regular issues that have to be addressed on a daily basis. For many others whose children do not have contact or are in long term care, or may have no identified family members there may be no issues at all.

The decision was made to target all East Sussex carers as there was no easy way to identify those who are most affected.

Given the comparatively small number and wide spread of respondents across East Sussex it is unlikely there will have been collaboration between respondents.

The questions covered the following areas relating to contact.

## 2. LOGISTICS

- Arrangements for travel.
- Distance to the contact venue.
- Frequency
- Supervision during the contact period.

## 3. IMPACT

- On the Looked After Child's behaviour
- Both prior to and after the contact
- What issues are presented to the carer and the carer's family
- The carer's understanding of the purpose of contact.
- Whether those objectives are being met.
- Who benefits from the contact.
- Contact held within the home.
- Whether the parents turned up regularly or otherwise.
- The experience with birth parents. Have the children been over indulged with sweets or gifts to inappropriate levels.

## 4. PHONE/FACEBOOK other social media etc

- Is it supervised?
- Frequency
- The carer's landline or a mobile
- Whose is the mobile?
- How is phone contact managed?
- Is it satisfactory?

## 5. CONSULTATION

- Was the carer consulted prior to contact being arranged?
- Were their views taken into consideration?
- Other contact with siblings or other relatives.

## 2.1 LOGISTICS

The Logistical arrangements for contact with birth families seem to work well, in that virtually all Looked After Children, (LACs) are transported to, and from contact by support workers, who then supervise the actual contact period.

There is a good level of satisfaction with 13 respondents making positive comments in this area with few adverse comments. It would seem that as and when a child moves to permanence so the frequency of contact decreases and the carer sometimes takes over the transport arrangements.

There are concerns over changes of support workers at short notice and the associated expectation that the child should then leave the carers' home with a complete stranger. There is a greater level of concern at the arrangements made by some agencies and the increased frequency of staff changes. (70) Also the lack of amenities at some of the private agencies.(60)

Concern was frequently expressed at the distance the children have to travel to contact e.g.;

- 40 miles round trip (15)
- 1 child 5 contacts a week total of 150 miles per week (47)
- Also a carer with 3 children having contact 3 times a week for hours at a time described as "too much and too long" (48)

Carers report an almost total lack of feedback received by carers of the contact experience. There was one specific request for the same written report that would be made to the child's Social Worker (42)

Carers' main concerns are the high frequency of contact per child per week. A carer with three separate children may have three separate sets of arrangements for any given week. This will be subject of other comments below.

"3 LACs under 7 with contact for one placement running every day Monday – Friday for 2 hours at a time. Now been happening for 4 months as result of a court order – No time for other matters – shopping etc"(54)

### 3.1 IMPACT

The carers were first asked about their understanding of the purpose of contact, whether those objectives are being met, and what issues are presented to the carer and their own family

#### 3.1.1 Understanding

Virtually all carers demonstrated a clear understanding of the reasons and objectives for contact. There was an interesting division as to whether those objectives are actually being met with an even split of 14 being very positive about the outcomes and reporting no problems with contact objectives; “Contact very positive for children and all happy with the benefits (35)  
“Contact is beneficial to all involved” (69)

And 15 being more negative;

“Contact always results in backlash in behaviour in the foster home” (24)  
“I’m not sure about the child benefiting from contact as he gets very stressed at the moment.” (29)

There were many comments in similar veins supporting both views.

#### 3.1.2 Whether the parents turn up regularly or otherwise and the effect on those in their care.

16 or 22% of the respondents were able to quote frequent instances when this has happened with current or previous placements, with inevitable adverse effects on the LACs

#### 3.1.3 Over-indulgence of LACs, with sweets or gifts to inappropriate levels.

This subject resulted in some of the highest responses with 44 or 60% of the respondents making comments indicating that it is a regular issue.

Superficially this may seem to be a matter of less importance but it is clear that it is a means of buying affection and can also be a way of subverting the carer and the best intentions of managing the child’s health generally and specifically dental health.

Most feel supported by the Social Worker in reducing the amount of over indulgence, but some feel un-supported when raising the matter.

“I was told it's not worth rocking the boat” (9)

“Mother gives money – sometimes £60 “ Addressed by SW. (11)

“Kids expect it every time “ (38)

“Too many sweets at contact” with consequential effect on meal times “ (40)

“My child I’ll do what I like “ (42)

“One child was smothered – the other ignored “ (44)

“My concerns were brushed aside” (45)  
“The children were deliberately stuffed full of sugar and Es (E numbers!) (46)  
“Frequently – This leads to the children having a false view of their parents having changed from neglectful/dangerous people to indulgent and caring people. Frequently children come with dental problems and we have to monitor their sugar intake. When they return from contact with bags of sweets and cakes, it then makes the carers appear to be mean and unkind in taking the sweets and rationing them out!” (57)  
“All the time – every contact” (61)  
“Always “ (62)  
“Mum goes to extremes with sweets, specially at Xmas and Birthday presents “ (64)

The complete opposite

“No, but always makes promises and nothing materialises “ (65)

And finally

“All the children I have cared for have been over indulged “(66)

#### 3.1.4 Contact within the carers home

This subject elicited some of the strongest response. Whilst there were very few comments in favour of such contact arrangements, several carers made comments indicating that they were totally against such contact;

“Don’t have contact in my home – doesn’t work” (13)  
“Would never agree to contact within my home, too invasive and difficult for contact” (24)  
“Contact in our home would be inappropriate”(32)  
“Has had contact in the home – does not want it again as the parent was reluctant to leave “ (42)  
“There should be no contact in the carer’s home as the LAC should have some personal space “(45)  
“I will not allow contact in the home – There will be no confrontation here” (46)  
“I will not have contact in the home as it is too disruptive and unsettling for the children – Our home needs to feel a safe / nurturing place (68)

#### 3.1.5 On the LACs behaviour both prior to and after the contact

This question produced a vastly different result with 31 or 42% of all respondents reporting negative behaviour both just prior to and after contact. Only 8, or 11%, reported positive behaviour.

“LAC blames himself for being in care which is heightened by contact”(1)  
“Behaviour regresses back to before they were in care after each contact”(2)  
“After contact he is usually tired and stressed”(9)  
“Mum often late or doesn’t turn up – very distressing for the children”(21)  
“Contact always results in backlash in behaviour in the foster home (24)



“Child gets angry before and feels let down after contact” (42)  
 “Child is often badly behaved after contact” (45)  
 “It has a huge impact on him and his routines, attachment etc”(47)  
 “Erratic attendance by parents with resulting unsettled baby”(52)  
 “Contact affects the child causing anxiety, challenging behaviour and bedwetting” (56)  
 “Non attendance and cancellations lead to a stressed child”(57)  
 “Contact is twice a week resulting in LACS being angry and upset for days afterwards as a result of being given conflicting information. Described as being very agitated from Sunday till day of contact”(61)  
 “ Carer believes that the mother is using the child in a power conflict with the dept resulting in a child with torn loyalties to her mother and her carer family “ Permanent carer (64)  
 “After contact he becomes tired, irritable and difficult to rouse in the mornings. No one appears to be benefiting from these arrangements” Permanent carer of a 17yr old (65)  
 “Mum is disinterested and often fails to attend resulting in disruption to the child's sleep and feeding routines(66)  
 “ The children can be unsettled for days afterwards (67)  
 “One child is currently displaying very aggressive behaviour to mum and has hurt other children after contact”(68)  
 “ When contact is cancelled at last minute child is then anxious, stroppy and moody for days before returning to normal behaviour”(70)

### 3.1.6 What issues are presented to the carer and the carer's family?

All the above issues relating to the LACs behaviour after contact apply, but it is also clear that increased levels of contact and frequency affects the carers' ability to manage the day to day running of the home. For example, shopping trips have to be fitted in with contact arrangements.

“Contact impinges on any after school clubs and homework is affected”(2)  
 “Unable to take children away during school holidays as contact was increased to 4 days a week at this time.(40)  
 “Contact continues through holidays so unable to go away for a holiday. A side effect of this is that the carers' own son is also unable to have outings etc so he is losing out.(49)  
 “Strong views on the disruption to the infants sleep and feeding routines”(66)  
 “I have 3 young LACs with a hectic contact schedule of 8-10 contacts a week with all collected and supervised. Result – It does feel like your life is on hold sometimes “(68)

(There is a current report relating to Children Who Foster and the effect of these and similar issues. CWF Hiles-Hawley Partnership October 2011 )

### 3.1.7 Who benefits from the contact?

Overall the impression given by most respondents is that it is the child's birth parents who are demanding the contact and that it is they who seem to benefit most from it. Just 10, or 13%, of the respondents reported that they felt the children are benefiting from the experience. The balance reported otherwise.

"Contact not benefiting younger children as too distressing"(7)

At least two carers were of the opinion that the only benefit of the contact was to the department for assessment purposes.(29)(48)

#### 4.1 PHONE CONTACT / FACEBOOK and other Social Media.

In view of the modern trend towards the use of social media it was decided to include this means of contact as well as contact by phone.

However there were virtually no reports of the use or misuse of Facebook etc and for the purposes of this report can be disregarded.

Phone contact on the other hand produced many responses, covering the range of areas including frequency, timing – often at bedtimes resulting in disruption in the carers home, the management and monitoring of the call. Ten respondents made strong negative comments about this and only one was in favour.

“Telephone contact can be positive but also don’t have much to say to each other” (23) This was the one positive reply

“Phone contact every night, child disinterested and disrupts bedtime routine” (9)

“16 year old has too much telephone contact and often still bedwets”(28)

“Had poor experience of phone contact – mother twisted everything that was said” (38)

“ After 12 years Mum still calls out of the blue – promises made but never kept”(40)

“Refuse to have phone contact unless it is subject of a court order except at Xmas. Found it to be very disruptive and difficult to monitor. Also there is the invasion of the child’s safe place”(45)

“I refuse phone contact – always found it to be useless” (46)

“Had a very bad experience of phone contact where the father found out our phone number and has rung when drunk, and intimidated our family and possibly done damage to our family car “(50)

“Telephone contact causes problems in disturbing the child and becoming hyperactive”(56)

“Bad experience of phone contact which had to be monitored and the phone held by the carer at times” (57)

## 5.1 CONSULTATION

Lack of consultation over the amount of contact was a regular feature with frequent reports of simply not being listened to or ignored. 13, or 18%, of the respondents reported this area of concern compared with 6, or less than 1%, felt they had been consulted over contact arrangements.

“Told when contact was to be – no consultation”(2)

“Informed of the arrangements all the way”(4)

“Limited if no negotiation regarding contact”(5)

“Usually told about contact arrangements – if a problem then it gets discussed”(7)

“Always been consulted on contact times”(12)

“Wasn’t involved at all in contact set up”(21)

“Not involved when contact was arranged “ (23)

“Contact only discussed at LAC reviews and our views are always secondary”  
(28)

## 6.1 GENERAL COMMENTS

Carers were invited to make comments about matters they were most concerned about. Most points are raised and demonstrated above, however some are worth repeating here. Again it should be noted that many of the comments are complimentary in the way that contact may work – Only the more constructive comments are repeated here.

‘As you are obviously already aware, contact is definitely not for the good of the child. However the law is stating that SW’s have to ‘promote contact’. I thought the welfare of the child was paramount, clearly not.’

‘Contact can be and should be beneficial but at all times it should be done with the child’s interests paramount. On more than one situation, the parents ‘needs’ have overridden the needs of the child. The rejection a child may feel on non-attendance. I believe leads to greater damage. If a parent cannot manage the arrangements, then the contact may need to be suspended until they are in a better place physically emotionally and psychologically to prevent further damage to their child.’

‘When we first had the children contact was 3x per week. After care order was made it went to 1x per week and then over 3 months it went to 4x per week with mum and stayed the same ie 2x monthly with father. Before care order was made we had good contact with mum but afterwards she would not speak to me. Children didn’t want to go to contact, only I remained positive. After contact child became distressed, angry and would bully younger siblings. Mother did not attend contact for 1 year and 2 children had to have CAMHS counselling to deal with anger management. Contact has now resumed and children feel happier.’

‘Sometimes on previous cases contact has been very damaging to the children, especially when disclosures were made at later dates. Parents can say very damaging things but this is case specific, every case needs to be addressed individually and acted on quickly not the slow wait for LAC review mentality – decisions need to be made a lot quicker.’

‘Feel that courts should act swiftly if parents fail to turn up, not give them so many chances. Courts don’t see the detrimental effect on youngsters – their disappointment.’

‘The children need to know that foster parents (carer’s homes) are separate safe space otherwise all the emotions get tangled and often children feel compromised and don’t know how to behave in front of their blood relatives. Too much pressure.’

‘The biggest problem I have is trying to fit them all in and have family time as well (often in holidays we will have 4-5 contact sessions during the week where the rest of us can’t go and do anything else.)’

‘We struggle to understand contacts purpose as mum has already told the court she will not contest any care order so we cannot see what will be gained as mum rarely misses contact but according to most reports hardly engages with the child there. I worry about the lack of feedback I get as a carer. I’d like to know if there was a problem at contact so I understand what is happening with the child in my care.’

‘There is the impact on the children. Young children still have an afternoon sleep. Therefore contact is generally in the morning and this is correct. However with contact set at 4 or 5 days a week, the child is out of the home more than in it. This means it takes longer for them to settle and children are exhausted by the end of the week as there is no real time to relax. The other impact is on socialisation. A child in this position finds themselves getting up having breakfast, going to contact, returning home, having lunch, and then sleeping. They get up and play for a little while and the evening routine starts. Where is the time for nursery, playgroups, visits to the park etc? And in between all the other appointments need to be fitted in as well, medical etc. Children are in my opinion missing out on vital childhood experiences that other children have. This is detrimental to their development.’

And one of the most important comments;

‘When children have been abused in every sense but the parents have never admitted it, so children are made out to be lying. I feel this has a very serious impact on contact when parents act as if nothing has happened. Children become even more confused and angry as they do not feel safe or listened to. In these circumstance children can remain angry and in my opinion would be more able to move on with their lives with no contact ‘

(These carers are asking for Facilitated Contact, which is a very important topic and is subject of a separate paper)

There were many other useful comments.

## 7.1 CONCLUSIONS

Definite themes emerged from the survey. There is good understanding by carers of the reasons for contact i.e. to maintain relationships and enable assessments to take place. There is an overall level of satisfaction that the logistical arrangements work well, with reservations and concern about strangers arriving on the doorstep to take children away to contact; this mostly refers to use of agencies.

There are requests for written feedback on the contact sessions.

There appears to be a general view that contact is not for the good of the child but for the parent followed by the needs for the assessment.

Children are often seen to be travelling too far to contact and for too long a period, and too often on a daily basis, leaving the child tired and stressed afterwards.

Unsurprisingly, children revert to previous poor behaviour after contact. The poor behaviour is then seen to impact on the carers' own children, Children who Foster, who are a much neglected group.

Very few carers report being consulted about the frequency of contact. Where a carer has several placements, each with their own contact arrangements, this can impact hugely on the management and stress levels within the carers' own family.

The responses suggest that there is too much contact. Although there was no specific question relating to "multiple contacts", 20 carers reported multiple contacts which for the purpose of this report are defined as three or more contacts per week. Of the same 20 carers, 10 reported very poor post-contact behaviour. This cannot be co-incidence.

The negative effects of parents failing to appear or cancelling are frequently reported, along with over indulgence with sweets and gifts. Social Workers are credited with dealing positively on most, but not all, of these incidents. There should be more standardisation with regard to these matters.

There are many comments about the fact that the frequency of contact after school with school aged children prevents the LAC from taking part in clubs or other activities with the carers' family (see 3.1.6). Similarly, contact in school holidays and particularly half term is a serious issue and again impacts on Children who Foster.

One huge area of concern is contact within the carers' home. Most simply do not want contact in the home and those who have done so in the past do not

want it again. There are numerous examples of problems experienced in this area. (See 3.1.4.)

Carers who have had experience of telephone contact are also against repeating it in future placements. There are problems in managing the calls, the timing – often just before bedtime causing distress to the child- and the sheer problems when the calls get out of hand. Calls are reported as being difficult to monitor and very disruptive to all the family. There is one example of a father obtaining the number then ringing when drunk and intimidating the carer. (See 4.1)

With regard to both contact in the home and telephone contact several carers make the point that the carers' home is supposed to be a safe environment and that a visit or a phone call by a possibly abusive parent into that home is an invasion of that safe space.

Several carers have made the point that ongoing contact with no review or objective in sight is a problem particularly when there are no plans for the LAC to be returned to the family.

One carer has asked for a concept known as “Facilitated Contact,“ which is discussed fully in a separate paper. (Appendix 1.)

In essence, Facilitated Contact is seen as an opportunity not just for passive observation of the contact period but as an opportunity for therapeutic change for the child. The birth parents are first asked to take part in the facilitated contact and are prepared by reviewing their lives so far, discussing the nature of contact as currently arranged. The child should then be helped to prepare questions they wish to present to the birth parent. The contact period itself should be structured. The parents should then explain and apologise to the child for not doing a good job at parenting, telling the child it is not their fault things went wrong. Birth parents then tell the child that they have met the new carers/adopters and that they want them to parent the child, want the child to be happy in the new home and to trust their new parents. Facilitated Contact is currently only normally used at adoption but could surely be adapted to suit the short term. Having accepted their responsibilities it may then be possible for the birth family to move forward.



## 7.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

With such a complicated subject it is difficult to make clear recommendations. However, as stated above, there are definite themes in the 73 responses.

Several issues have been highlighted;

One emerging theme is that it is newer carers who feel under pressure to have more placements, with subsequent pressure to comply with the demands for contact. These are the ones who also feel pressured into having contact in the home and to allow telephone contact to take place. More experienced carers who have had several placements are likely to be more robust in working with the department. It is reasonable to deduce that there will be instances of carers who will cease to be carers because of bad experiences in the area of contact. These losses represent a huge cost to the department. Therefore the recommendations are made in the interests of Best Practice and standardisation of such practice and also in the financial interest of the department.

Looking at the different areas of the survey and based on the response of the carers, the ESFCA would like to make the following recommendations to the decision makers, both in the Department and the legal practitioners in the Court arena.

### LOGISTICS

1. That there should be no “stranger” turning up to take a child to contact. At the very least the child should know two workers so that in the event of sickness etc, the other can be deployed.
2. That if the above fails then it should be left to the carer’s discretion to cancel contact.
3. That the use of agencies should be more closely monitored particularly with reference to the above, and the nature of the venue and facilities offered.
4. That there should be better feedback from the contact supervisor preferably in written form and ideally a copy of the report received by the Social Worker.
5. The sheer frequency of the contact arrangements needs to be closely monitored and due consideration given to the fact that other children with the carer will have their own arrangements already in place.

## IMPACT

6. That once birth parents establish a pattern of not turning up to contact, they should be given a written warning. After a repeat no show then they should be advised that they must phone beforehand to confirm they are attending and only then should a younger child be taken to contact.
7. That parents should be firmly advised about over indulgence with sweets etc. After a further instance there should be a written warning with a suspension of contact if there are any repeats.
8. That there should be no contact in the carers' own home and no pressure brought to bear on carers to entertain this.
9. That there should be no telephone contact into the carers home other than in exceptional cases such as the birth parent being in another county or sudden illness etc.
10. There should be a general recognition and understanding by the decision makers of the impact of too much contact and the effects of poor contact.
11. That there should be much more flexibility for a carer to cancel or vary contact to the LACs benefit to enable the child to be taken on carers family holidays and to attend after school clubs and functions. This to be used sparingly and in consultation with the department

## CONSULTATION

12. That there should be a far greater level of consultation with the carer both prior to the initial placement, and during the placement..
13. That there should be a readiness to challenge the existing contact arrangements, based on the current or changed situation.
14. As may be seen in Para 5.1, only one percent of the respondents felt fully consulted with regard to contact. Therefore it is a firm recommendation that there should be a formal Review of contact after a given period e.g. 1 month after the initial contact at which point all aspects should be reviewed, to include;
  - Attendance or otherwise of the birth parents,
  - Reaction to the contact experience by the child i.e. reverting to dysfunctional or challenging behaviour, either prior to or after the contact.
  - Frequency of the contact.
  - The duration of the journey
  - Gifts and sweets from the birth parents.
  - Ability of the parents to work with all parties for the good of the child.

- Effect on the child's social or school life – ie to attend after school clubs or nursery.
15. That the Review should be written into the Care Plan as a matter of routine protocol.
16. That there should be a greatly enhanced use of Facilitated Contact.

The above recommendations are based on evidence provided by the survey and that ESFCA feels empowered to speak on behalf of the foster carers of East Sussex. Further to this the ESFCA would refer decision makers to paragraph 7 of the Foster Carers Charter foreword by Children's Minister Tim Loughton MP;

“It is essential therefore that foster carers are at the heart of consultation for looked after children and MUST be fully engaged, supported and consulted at EVERY stage”

Also

“ Although foster carers have a responsibility to promote contact, guidance on good practice clearly states that this is a ‘team effort’ and the Local Authority has a duty to ensure that carers are in the best possible position to make contact as safe and enjoyable as possible. “

And

“Experienced foster carers will know that Contact can have its difficulties. In some circumstances it may be clear that contact will not benefit children or could be damaging depending of the risks involved. This however is unusual and the Family Law Courts have the power to restrict contact if they decide it is not in the child's best interests.

Contact can also cause distress for children and foster carers are often the people who have to deal with this when a child feels confused or disappointed. “

Extracts taken from the Foster Carers Handbook.

The evidence from the survey is that the incidence of contact not benefiting the Looked After children of East Sussex is not that unusual.

Further Reading.

Children Who Foster - Hiles Hawley Partnership, October 2011

The Munro Review of Child Protection.

The Foster Carers Handbook.

The Foster Carers Charter

Facilitated Contact as Trauma Resolution – Family Futures, London

East Sussex Foster Care Association - March 2012