



# **East Sussex Foster Care Association**

## **ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16**



Registered Charity No. 1092668

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# CONTENTS

<b>Letter from the Chair</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>More about East Sussex Foster Care Association</b>	<b>Page 5</b>
<b>Inspire – our performing Arts project</b>	<b>Page 6</b>
<b>PGL for Looked After Children</b>	<b>Page 7</b>
<b>No more black plastic bags</b>	<b>Page 8</b>
<b>Computers for Looked after Children</b>	<b>Page 8</b>
<b>ESFCA has the X factor</b>	<b>Page 9</b>
<b>Christmas party</b>	<b>Page 10</b>
<b>Pantomime</b>	<b>Page 11</b>
<b>Social Work Heroes</b>	<b>Page 12</b>
<b>How we support our foster carers</b>	<b>Page 13</b>
<b>Our financial statement</b>	<b>Page 14</b>
<b>List of funders who have supported ESFCA</b>	<b>Page 15</b>

## Letter from the chair



Welcome to our annual report for 2015-2016; a year of ongoing development for East Sussex Foster Care Association (ESFCA). Although, unexpected and perhaps gently cajoled by others, I found myself stepping into the chairperson's role when Fred Livings stepped down in October 2015.

Taking on the chairperson's role was not a decision I took lightly particularly as I, like many of us, lead a very busy life. However, my passion for the work of the Association and the children and families we serve, alongside my belief in our enthusiastic and experienced team spurred me on. As someone who believes in the importance of team-work and having key players, I am delighted to have the support of two vice-chairs in Chris Thornton and Mark Thornborough, both of whom have many years' experience of working with ESFCA. Having Ann Holder's (MBE) support and guidance as our longest serving committee member, has been fundamental to bringing us back to re-focus on our core values and mission statement which is central to all we want to achieve.

ESFCA has come a long way in the last 24 years. However, change in my view, is a factor of the reality of our situation and a positive necessity and summed up in the words of Marshall Goldsmith I believe that:

*'.....What got us here won't necessarily get us there.....'*

Therefore, the trustees have spent time auditing existing systems, roles, responsibilities and this consolidation was aimed at eliminating overlap and to create greater efficiencies. Above all I wish to create opportunities in which our members feel able to bring their ideas to the table in a supportive, inclusive environment. In this regard, you will read within this report of the extensive list of new innovative ideas, developed by our team. This includes Ronnie Archers's already much loved performing arts project 'Inspire' and Ru Petratis-William's unique Super Hero's project. These have been run alongside some of the older and much loved projects including PGL breaks and a visit to the X-factor, to name but a few.

My sincere thanks goes to everyone who has played their part in ESFCA's achievements including our valued committee members, staff and of course funders, including East Sussex County Council (ESCC), each one being as important as the next in ensuring the success of our organisation.

We welcome the return of Tina Henderson to the Association as a trustee and acknowledge her tireless work behind the scenes. In addition we welcome Ru Petratis-William (trustee), Jane Hollobone and Liz Chalcraft (committee members) . I extend my thanks to our regular guest members; Ade Sewell, Operations Manager for fostering; Colin Belsey, Chair to ESCC and to all the social workers who offer their time and interest including our newest guest social worker, Justin Baker.

While proud of our independence, our organisation is strengthened further by our valued partnership and close working relationship with staff and managers of ESCC who attend our monthly committee meetings. However, a group of unsung heroes amongst us, who I must mention, are our respective partners who are often volunteered (by us) in hands-on roles and take on the challenge without so much as even questioning it!

While acknowledging that our team will operate somewhat differently, our mission is to increase our effectiveness and maximise our efficiency within a revised framework, yet continue to uphold existing values that support the holistic fostering community. It is also important that we remember that our members all give up valuable time freely to the Association and its undertaking. To keep us motivated and cohesive I am planning some more team building days; there are many more fun times ahead.

We are a diverse group of people with one vision, which is to provide positive memories for our cared for children and recognition and support to the whole fostering family, which in turn strengthens relationships and helps underpin the stability of the placement. If you are interested in joining us we actively welcome new foster carer members and or guest visitors from all areas of the fostering community. We meet on the second Monday of each month at Little Dunbar in Hailsham. For more information please contact Hannah Carter on 01323 747045

With Kind Regards

Susanne Beesley Chair



## **East Sussex Foster Care Association**

East Sussex Foster Care Association (ESFCA) is an independent charity run by foster carer, for foster carers and their families, who are registered carers for East Sussex County Council.

It was launched in March 1993 in a direct response to the needs of the children/young people in public care across the county and the demands this place on their foster families. Since its introduction, carers have designed a range of support, advice, advocacy, activities and training services for their fellow carers, families and the children in foster care throughout East Sussex.

We have monthly meetings and we currently have 6 Trustees who have overall responsibility for our charity

There are approximately 610 children in care within East Sussex at any one time, from age ranging birth to 25 years old. The majority of the children live within foster families. Most of the children have come into care having experienced abuse. A significant number have been physically, sexually or emotionally abused and many have suffered chronic neglect. Some may have witnessed domestic violence and parents struggling with alcohol and drug abuse.

We are keen to show these vulnerable children and young people, that by offering help, support, guidance, education and inspiration, we can help them succeed and enable them to build a brighter future for themselves.

When people think about foster families, they often think about the carers, looked after children, but very few people stop to think of the impact of fostering on carers own children (Children who foster). These remarkable children share their homes, parents, toys, wider family with some of our most vulnerable children, yet their input is often unrecognised. ESFCA is keen to offer additional support to children who foster and find ways of saying 'thank you'. They are often the role models for our foster children and they are influential in building trust and relationship with children in care.

## **PROJECT INSPIRE- PREFORMING ARTS**



During February half-term, an all inclusive group of young people, enjoyed three fun filled days of voice training, movement and dance, delivered by two extremely experienced and capable Tutors associated with the Pauline Quirke Academy of Performing Arts.

It was delightful to witness a group of apprehensive young people, grow in confidence and bond closely as a group. To celebrate the conclusion, Operations Manager for the fostering team, Ade Sewell, attended the final presentation performance, offering each child a certificate relating to individual achievement.

This was the fourth Inspire opportunity for our young people, two being twelve week projects held in Eastbourne and Hailsham. We had also previously held a very successful holiday club in Eastbourne and wished to extend this experience for those living in the Bexhill/Hastings area.

The feedback from our young people was in itself 'inspiring', with comments such as "I Love Inspire" and "Can we do this again"? These positive responses from the young people themselves are testimony to the continued success of an 'Inspiring' project





*Action & Adventure*

ESFCA funded a 3 day residential trip to PGL for 27 foster children and 12 adult helpers, most of which were the social workers for the children. We were keen to allow relationships to flourish and grow between children in care and their social workers and by spending good quality time together, many relationships took on a deeper meaning.

This also allowed children in foster care the opportunity to try many new experiences like BMX biking, Raft Building, Giant Swing, Archery, Abseiling, Zip Wire and tunnel trails. This allowed the children to build on their confidence and self-esteem. Every child achieved something new (as well as their social workers). It also broke the isolation that many children feel about being in the care system, as they realised that they were not the only ones. These residential adventures bring the children together for mutual support, encouragement, respect and team work. Every child received a medal and a camera to collect their individual photographic memories.



## **NO MORE BLACK PLASTIC BAGS**

No child (and especially foster children) should have to face the distressing sight of having their belongings packed into black plastic bags, when being moved either from birth family or to new foster placements. Black plastic bags are designed for rubbish and not children's personal belongings.

Most of the 200 suitcases/holders we purchased have been distributed to children and young people in most need of this luggage, including children with disabilities who regularly travel to respite to give their birth families a break.

We also have a stock of luggage available to social services duty and assessment teams, so that if a child needs to be moved as an emergency, social workers will have immediate access to suitcases.



## **Computers for LAC**

Working in partnership with the Local Authority and the Virtual School the Association has helped provide a considerable number of laptops to LAC, over the period 2014/15. These machines are allocated by the Virtual School to support our children's education and usually go to older children, since they are not as 'robust' as traditional desktop systems. This process will continue into next year, 2016, when a further 20 or so of these machines will become available.

It's worth noting that these machines have been freed by the Local Authority during an upgrade programme, so if you happen to work for a Company which is reviewing its IT set up, it's always worth us asking, as we've done before, if the Association might receive some of the old equipment.

We will also be approaching the local Universities again to see if they might have any surplus equipment, which our children might benefit from. These are likely to be desktop machines, which can more easily be repaired and might be more suitable for younger children.

None of the machines are brand new, but all are tested as being functional and useable, before being allocated.



## ESFCA HAS THE



**ESFCA** purchased 100 tickets to take children in foster care to see the X factor Live Tour. Most children attended with their social workers and had their first experience of a concert. All the children received a letter from ESFCA to explain that 6 months ago, the stars for the X Factor were nobodies, but they had a dream, worked hard and believed in themselves and went on to achieve great things. ESFCA wanted to inspire our foster children to believe in themselves and work hard to achieve their dream.

It was a privilege to see children dancing, singing and sharing this event. We also were able to bring children together who came from large sibling groups who had been split up and live in separate foster families. This allowed the sibling the opportunity to enjoy each other's company, and build memories that they will be able to reminisce together in the future.

Reggie and Bollie won the hearts of our foster children (as well as some of the social workers)

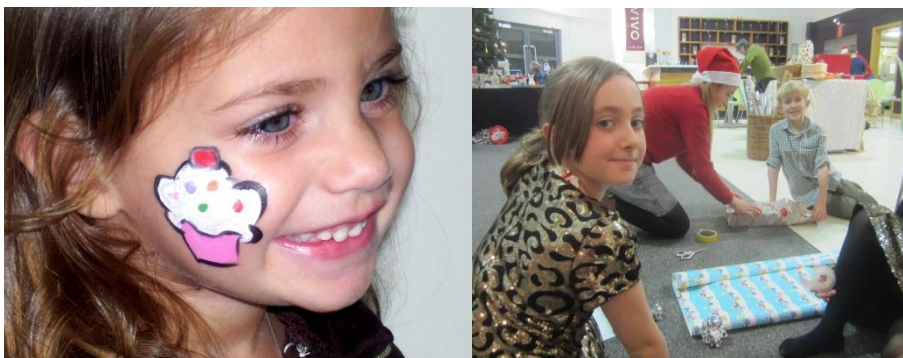


## Christmas Party

The Christmas party was held at the Kings Centre and was a great success and seems to get better every year with the Kings centre allowing us to use their charity initiative again and not charging for the venue. The relationship we have built over the last three years with the Lewes Soroptimists has enriched the party further for all and now includes the Eastbourne group too.



All agreed what a marvellous additional experience having the ladies there added to the party with 121 children wrapping presents for their carer's or parents and experiencing the joy of giving. Face painting was carried out by some of our older children who were a great help.



We were successful in raising funds through Sussex Community Foundation for the party which gave us the opportunity to splash out on extras.



I'm sure all who took part would agree that the collective effort paid off, and the support by so many people made this such an amazing experience. We even were able to put up our special Christmas Tree (Jades Tree) which remained up in the kings centre for all to enjoy.

**Raffle and festive treats**-One of our Trustees made a gingerbread House and another provided cake pops to raise money and books donated by Morrison's were sold off to raise funds at the party.

We were also supplied with helium balloons from Sussex University, mince pies from Brighton University and flowers from Ann's Flowers and our appreciation of their support helps nurture connections for the future.

Our thanks also goes to carers for helping put the food out and for clearing up at the end look what we can achieve when a bunch of carers work together.



**Pantomime – Peter Pan.** In January 2016, ESFCA purchased 224 family tickets for foster families to see Peter Pan in Pantomime. This is a very special event in our calendar and one that our foster children greatly appreciate. Christmas is always a difficult time for our children, as they are often unable to spend the festive season with their birth families. The feeling of isolation and loss are always high around this time of year.

The Panto allowed the whole foster family the opportunity to enjoy a great day out together. We were even lucky enough for a couple of our children to be picked and go on stage with the stars.

## The Foster Carers Choice Award



**Our two winners in the centre – Julie Bourne and Landy Mainwood-Smith along with Senior Managers and foster carers.**

ESFCA run a new initiative on the back of an in house social workers award. We believe that Foster Carers should have their say regarding the service they receive from Social Workers and should be able to acknowledge good practise. We asked foster carers to nominate and we were overwhelmed with responses. Here are some of the examples:-

- is consistent, firm, clear and very caring
- returns calls promptly, never misses meetings and appointments, restored our faith in the department single handed
- has shown a really in depth knowledge about emotional and physical needs of a LAC
- has a strong sense of “children first” and is not afraid to stand up for what she believes is right for the child (even if it goes against the norm)
- always happy, positive, diplomatic but above all, available
- has made sure she is available to us 24/7. We are in awe of her genuine care and concern which extends to each and every member of our family
- we feel reassured that her advice is straight and to the point

We received nominations for 20 Looked after children social workers and fostering social workers. This year’s winners are:

- Julie Bourne, Fostering team
- Landy Mainwood-Smith from the looked after children’s team
- Anne Buchan won outstanding contribution to fostering services.

Thank you to all foster carers who took time to contribute. We hope this event will grow each year and more foster carers feel able to share their positive experiences.

## **We continue to support our foster carers via the following services:**

- By coordinating the services of our allegations and standard of care worker.
- By successfully introducing and setting up monthly surgery sessions for carers to discuss concerns or issues directly with the relevant senior manager of fostering and children's services
- Regular Newsletters
- Our website
- Annual training conference
- Bi Annual training events, attended by foster carers, adopters, children services staff and social workers, education and health professionals as well as other agencies
- Various trips and activities for foster families and children in care as well as children who foster.
- Lobbying local and central government regarding issues relating to foster children
- Seeking feedback from carers through questionnaires and user groups to inform departmental policies and procedures which in turn help to improve services to all three of our stake holder groups, both directly and in-directly



**East Sussex Foster Care Association**

**Statement of financial activities (incorporating the income and expenditure account)**

**For the year ended 31 March 2016**

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	2016 Total	2015 Total
Notes	£	£	£	£
<b>Incoming Resources</b>				
Donations	622		622	1,286
Core funding	20,000		20,000	20,000
Advocacy support		2,665	2,665	10,000
Subscriptions	2,755		2,755	1,190
Fundraising	590		590	3,973
Grants		620	620	2,200
Contributions towards events	840		840	2,674
Conference receipts			-	14,225
Interest	49		49	8
<b>Total incoming resources</b>	<b>24,856</b>	<b>3,285</b>	<b>28,141</b>	<b>55,556</b>
<b>Resources expended</b>				
Conference	2,723		2,723	12,973
Insurance	493		493	493
General running expenses	173		173	648
Party and pantomime	3,508	911	4,419	4,328
Holiday project	2,857		2,857	6,724
Children who care			-	3,362
Performing arts project		1,916	1,916	866
Day trips	4,134	1,280	5,414	2,541
Carers library			-	407
Advocacy support		902	902	1,861
Salaries & pensions	8,848		8,848	11,080
Staff general expenses	125		125	348
Computer costs	170		170	200
Training	1,376		1,376	198
Accountants fees	1,067		1,067	831
<b>Total outgoing resources</b>	<b>25,473</b>	<b>5,009</b>	<b>30,482</b>	<b>46,860</b>
<b>Net incoming/(outgoing) resources for the year/ Net income/(expenditure) for the year</b>	<b>(617)</b>	<b>(1,724)</b>	<b>(2,342)</b>	<b>8,696</b>
Transfers	(291)	291	-	-
<b>Total funds brought forward</b>	<b>38,068</b>	<b>20,523</b>	<b>58,591</b>	<b>49,895</b>
<b>Total incoming resources</b>	<b>37,159</b>	<b>19,090</b>	<b>56,250</b>	<b>58,591</b>

## **List of funders for ESFCA**

ESFCA would like to acknowledge and thank the following organisations and individuals who have supported us during the last financial year.

**Lady Soroptimist from Lewes and Eastbourne**

**Seedcorn Fund**

**Life More Ordinary**

**Happy Days Trust**

**Sussex Community Foundation**

**Skinner Company Lady Neville Trust**

**Kings Centre Eastbourne**

**Rotherfield Bonfire Society**

**Sussex University**

**Brighton University**

**Anne's Flowers**

**East Sussex County Council**

**East Sussex Foster carers who make monthly donations to our charity**

ESFCA continue to work hard to secure funding for more projects and during the financial year 16/17, we have already received funding from Sainsbury's, Spark, The Austin Hope Pilkington trust, Merlin's Magic Wand, the Sussex Community Foundation, Greggs, Santander, The Sussex Masonic Charity, Verity Masonic Lodge and the National Lottery - all in addition to our own Fundraising activities....which is helping develop and expand our future provision for Foster families within East Sussex.