



## **East Sussex Foster Care Association**

# **Additional information for Corporate Parenting Panel – 27<sup>th</sup> January 2017**

### **How we raise funding to support foster families:-**

ESFCA has charity status which has allowed our Trustees and committee members the opportunity to develop some expertise in grant applications. Over the current financial year (since 1<sup>st</sup> April 16) we have raised an additional £24,600.04 in grants. We have also received donations of £2,850.00 in this same period. Foster Carers are also supporting us with many fundraising activities such as bag packing at Sainsbury's, Quiz night, Raffles and Roulette tables, just to mention a few. Our fundraising activities have created £4,702.82 this year.

### **Some of our exciting new projects:-**

## **SIBLING SUNSHINE PROJECT**

Our Sibling Sunshine Days project purposes to reconnect the looked after children who are separated in different foster homes within the County. We want to offer special events dedicated to separated siblings that help them in securing positive memories collectively. Ultimately, we hope to secure the bonds for the siblings in appropriate and enjoyable situations that can help them move into adolescent cohesively and more securely than they would have without sustaining relationships with birth family members.

Phase one of our programme went ahead in September when we took a coach full of excited siblings and their Carers to Chessington World of Adventures. Although the weather wasn't in our favour and it was a damp and drizzly day the children were none the less excited about the day ahead. It was so heart-warming to see children re-connect with their siblings and share the day. There

were rides for all ages; there was a safari ride and wild animals to see and entertainment for everyone. Our young people could be seen around the park laughing, taking photos, enjoying picnics and catching up on news the coach journey. There was a rowdy sing-along on the way home.

Phase two of the Sibling Sunshine day project was on Sunday 30th October. We took 50 people, siblings and their foster carers, to Butlin's at Bognor Regis for a Halloween themed day trip. Fancy dress was optional however the majority embraced the opportunity to dress up. A group of ghosts, ghouls and skeletons gathered in Eastbourne on a bright and crisp Sunday morning. We watched siblings come together and embrace each other, mutually admire fancy dress efforts and be excited to know they had quality time ahead that day. Without intervention activities like this some of the children may only get to see each other three or four times a year. Often this can be in 'sterile' contact centre meeting rooms.

The first task was to decorate the coach. The children excitedly set about hanging paper spiders, pumpkins, bats and ghosts. They strung bunting throughout the length of the coach, affixed window stickers and passed around plastic skeletons. This task really set off our day off to an encouraging start as the children worked out how to share out the decorations and put them up collaboratively. Working and playing together within their sibling groups, and with others families, helped attune the children for the day ahead in a fun and enjoyable way.

Once at Butlin's there was a host of things to do and the sibling groups headed swiftly onto the site. On offer was the funfair, go-carting, tandem bike, football, climbing challenge, cinema, soft play, bowling and arcade machines. Not forgetting live entertainment, the beach, the fabulous indoor swimming centre and more....

Our third and final Siblings Sunshine days funded event for the 2016/17 financial year will be a weekend residential break for siblings, supervised by

their Carers, at Butlins in Bognor Regis. Unfortunately it will be rare for siblings living in separate foster families to have the experience of a holiday collectively. This pilot residential trip is looking to offer that opportunity to family groups in the hope that they can share some valuable, extended leisure time together and tighten the blood bonds they share. Nominations are still being collated for this.

The benefit of enabling stable connections for siblings was our intention but there is so much more to this project and the other relationship stakeholders. The children can draw security from understanding their situation is valued but is also not in isolation. Social workers equally benefit from understanding and being able to connect with their past and existing family cases and the outcomes. The fostering community get to network and provide vital inter-dependent support, advice and empathy.

## **FAMILY FIRST NIGHTS**

Our charity, East Sussex Foster Care Association (ESFCA), is delighted to have been approved by Mousetrap Theatre projects to participate in their Family First Nights (FFN) programme. **From 28<sup>th</sup> July – 29<sup>th</sup> August 2016** almost 70 people from the East Sussex County council fostering community took advantage of the FFN programme through ESFCA.

Family First Nights is a unique opportunity for families with limited resources to enjoy a great London theatre production for just £6.00 a ticket. Family First Nights works for disadvantaged families, young people with special needs and notably for us *children in care*.

From late July to late August families enrolled with FFN were able to access the best seats for a selection of top musicals, plays and other productions. A family is the close unit that supports the child and can consist of guardians and carers but **MUST** include young people between the ages of 3 and 17. Young people **MUST** make up half, if not more of the family group and fall within one of the eligible categories mentioned above.

The FFN project serves new families only. Since Mousetrap has limited resources they must ensure they serve as many new families each summer as possible. Therefore this opportunity may be taken one time only. Mousetrap keeps a data base of families who have benefited from the experience. Families who have/will take part in the programme will continue to be updated on theatre offers.

Families went to see brilliant live shows like the Railway Children, Thriller, Showboat, the Gruffalo and many more. These families are now regularly offered discounted tickets to other London productions throughout the year.

ESFCA are looking forward to facilitating further first time London theatre experiences in the summers to come.

## **STABLE CONNECTION THROUGH INTUITIVE HORSE**

There are over 520 children in foster care in East Sussex at any one time, and this project aims to help the most vulnerable of them to work alongside their foster carers to overcome emotional barriers using the intervention of intuitive horses.

Looked After Children have all suffered adverse experiences of abuse and loss, which often manifests in poor attachment and lack of trust in the people around them.

This project addresses the need of Looked After Children to learn how to: trust and form attachments with both their long-term carers and other people; regulate their emotions, reflect and be calm as well as build their self confidence and esteem.

We are developing this project to help a 25 Looked After Children (LAC or children in care) and this project will be available to 25 LAC and their Foster Carers and each child will have access to a minimum of 6 sessions (3 hours per session). The cohort will spend time observing the herd of horses and their

behaviour and learning the basics of horse communication through interacting with a horse/s. Whilst learning this we would be covering areas like self-regulation, emotional awareness, communication skills, empathy, relationship forming/dynamics, group dynamics with some reflection time for how their time with the horses may be helpful in other areas of their life. There is also the opportunity for interacting with the sheep, dog and cats. All of this will happen surrounded by nature. During this time the child and Carer will be working towards:-

-De-stressing.

-Personal reflection.

-Time to reflect on personal circumstances and situations they may be feeling a little lost with.

-Helps to quieten your mind down.

-Gives you tools to take away and use in everyday life that help towards managing self awareness of your behavioural, emotional and mind states.

-Gives you an opportunity to relax and slow down from the fast pace of life.

-Helps you gain confidence and self-esteem.

-teach children the skills involved with being a team player

## **Partnership with Sainsbury's**

ESFCA were delighted to be picked to be the charity of the year for Sainsbury's in The Arndale Centre in Eastbourne. This has been an amazing partnership which has developed and been so enjoyable for all concerned.

Sainsbury's have held a number of fundraising events to support fostering within East Sussex.

They have also been able to support us to put 'the cherry on top of the cake' with some of our projects. At the Halloween Sibling Sunshine Project, Sainsbury's staff arrived at the coach pick up point with boxes of Halloween decorations so that the children could decorate the coach for their journey to Butlins. Sainsbury's also provided fruit and drinks for everybody on the coach.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> January, ESFCA organised over 200 tickets for foster families to see Snow White and The Seven Dwarfs at the Devonshire Theatre in Eastbourne. Just before the performance started, Sainsbury's staff arrived with sweets and drinks for all the children. The sweets were placed in beautiful bags, tied with ribbon and a label which read 'with love from Sainsbury's XX'. This made the children feel special and valued.

We are working with Sainsbury's to create 'emergency toiletry bags' that can be left with duty and LAC teams, so that when children have to be removed into the care system in an emergency, they will be given a toiletry bag with basics such as a toothbrush, toothpaste, flannel and hair brush'. This idea came from Sainsbury's.

## **PGL**

Last summer ESFCA ran 2 residential trips for LAC. Each residential lasted 3 days and we took 25 LAC on each residential. The children were supported by their Social Workers or Foster Carers. The first residential was for LAC aged 7 – 11 years and the second was aged 11 upwards.

### **More exciting projects include:**

- **Summer garden party**
- **Mally Dams**