



East Sussex Foster Care Association



ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17

East Sussex Foster Care Association

Registered Charity No. 1092668

Company No. 04216137

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East Sussex Foster Care Association

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Letter from the Chair



Welcome to our annual report for 2016-17, a year of great change for the charity.

As acknowledged in last year's report East Sussex Foster Carer Association's mission has been to increase our effectiveness while maximising our efficiency within a revised framework, and simultaneously to upholding existing values that support East Sussex County Council's fostering community.

I am delighted to say that we have achieved so much more this year than any of us could have hoped for, both from a business aspect in the development of our strengthened financial position and from a performance objective, as last year's innovative ideas have come to fruition and we are able to celebrate the success and increase in the delivery of activities and projects.

We have achieved this through the dedication and hard work of our amazing team by asking for feedback from our stakeholders and ensuring that all ideas brought to the table are explored and individuals are supported and encouraged to take a lead with projects, while working closely with the committee and ESCC fostering department and benefiting from their support and advice.

We are continuing to build a culture of 'shared knowledge' within the organisation to ensure that all understand the objectives of the trustees in accomplishing and living up to our mission statement which is to provide support, advice, advocacy, activities and training services for our fellow carers, families and the children in foster care throughout East Sussex.

Sharing knowledge is essential to the inevitability of membership and staff changes to ensure the continuity of our business model when any one individual stands down. This year we have said goodbye to Heather Eserin and thank her for helping to induct our new member of staff. Heather has served ESFCA well in her administrative role and has always been there with a very hands-on approach. We wish Heather well in her new role with ESCC and look forward to keeping a link with her.

During this year we welcomed Anja on board as a committee member as well as Jane Hollobone, Liz Chalcraft and Lysette Grosvenor as trustees and acknowledge the wealth of

knowledge and enthusiasm all four bring to the team.

Perhaps one of the most exciting and worthwhile objectives as a charity is our vision to build a community of engaged partners who share a common passion to help make a difference to the lives of looked after children and the families who care for them. In this regard we are delighted this year to have been voted to be Sainsbury's (Arndale centre) community partner and have built a strong connection to the amazing staff team there, who are fully committed to supporting our work.

It is now incumbent on us to continue to forge relationships with other community partners while maintaining our close partnership with ESCC to ensure we preserve our relevance going forward.

The future for ESFCA is looking good supported by Hannah Carter our Funding and Development Coordinator and Mandie Dugdale our new Administrative Support who have already shown tireless efforts to increase the credibility and visibility of ESFCA in our community. The resulting goodwill Hannah in particular is nurturing has become a huge asset to us, and the relationships she is helping to foster with our supporters and partners will ensure ESFCA will prosper and enable us to continue focusing on the wellbeing of children and families in the East Sussex Fostering Community.

Finally my grateful thanks goes to the trustees, committee members and friends of the Association for their time and dedication not forgetting ESCC for their continued support and belief in ESFCA. My particular thanks goes to our vice Chair's, Chris Thornton for his dedication to our staff and overseeing our financial affairs and Mark Thornbrough for his willingness to step in whatever the circumstance.

I think what really strikes me is the energy and enthusiasm that has been upheld by our team, during a time of transition to our business model and the obvious success we have experienced which enables us to develop and continue to deliver the support that our Fostering Community needs and deserves.

Susanne Beesley

ESFCA Chair



Structure

Chair Person: Susanne Beesley
Vice Chairs: Chris Thornton
Mark Thornborough
Treasurer: Chris Thornton
Trustees: Susanne Beesley, Chris Thornton, Mark Thornborough,
Ru Petraitis-Williams, Ann Holder MBE, Tina Henderson,
Lysette Grosvenor, Jane Hollobone



East Sussex Foster Care Association

Aims and Objectives

East Sussex Foster Care Association (ESFCA) is an independent charity run by foster carers, for fellow 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 8 Trustees who have overall responsibility for our charity

There are 577 children in care within East Sussex (as of 01.09.17), from age ranging birth to 18 years old of which 486 of the children live within foster families. There are currently 443 foster carer (245 families) within East Sussex. 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.



East Sussex Foster Care Association

Activities



ESFCA is delighted to receive funding from Children in Need and Santander to be able to provide 2 residential experiences for Looked After Children at a PGL centre. The children were supported by social workers and foster carers and had the opportunity to take part in many new experiences including, Giant Swing, Aeroball, Canoeing, Raft building, Climbing and many team activities. The experience allowed the children the opportunity to build trusting relationships and gave them some positive childhood memories.



Mallydams

ESFCA was invited to have a number of 4 hour sessions at Mallydams RSPCA rescue centre in April 2016. These were very successful and foster families had the opportunity to visit this centre that is not open to the public. We had lots of woodland activities and learned about lots of different animals and had a huge open bonfire with toasted marshmallows. For some of our children, this was their first real experience of being close up to nature and they got so much from the opportunity



This has led to ESFCA having a residential trip at Mallydams in November 2017.

LUGGAGE

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.

Merlin's Magic Wand



ESFCA told Merlin's Magic Wand, the charitable arm of the Merlin Group of Attractions, about our Sibling Sunshine Days Project and its aim to reunite siblings separated within care in the county.

In return Merlin's magic Wand offered us tickets to take 50 children and foster carers to Chessington World of Adventures.. and gave us a contribution towards hiring a coach to transport everyone! As a result we were able to take a coach full of excited siblings for a fabulous day out during September 2016. How lovely it was to witness siblings greet each, secure in the knowledge they had a full day together and one full of rides, shows and even a safari. Such precious opportunities like this allow the children to bank some collective, positive, memories to add to their repertoire.

Family First Nights

ESFCA completed their second summers partnership with Mousetrap Theatre Productions, Family First Nights Programme (FFN). The programme is aimed at introducing the theatre to disadvantaged young people, from partnership organisations like ours, during the summer break at a fantastic rate of only £6.00 per person., as a one off opportunity.



Dozens of ESFCA fostering families took advantage of this opportunity and headed for the bright lights of the West End. With over 30 professional productions to choose from, including Thriller Live, 42nd Street, Half a Sixpence, Les Miserables, Motown the Musical, Gangsta Granny, Alice in wonderland and many more....there was no shortage of choice. In addition, families could opt for free workshops at some theatres prior to the performance or even some relaxed, autism friendly performances. Those who participated will be kept up-to-date directly with special offers and opportunities from now on.

If you didn't get to join in the fun during 2017, then look out next year for details of the summer 2018 programme, which will be released by ESFCA in June.

Sainsbury's



What a year....

On July the 30th 2016 Sainsbury's Eastbourne (the small store in the Arndale center) adopted the ESFCA as its local charity store of the year. This would normally result in a few days of bag packing, dress up days and collections to raise funds to help the local charity fund projects.

However the ESFCA was and is different, after meeting the inspiring team that help run the charity it was very clear we wanted to do as much as we could to help these amazing foster carers and the children they help and keep safe. As a store the colleagues collectively thought of new ways to raise funds as well as volunteer their time.

Colleagues ran Quizzes in partnership with local pubs, they dressed up and ran fund raising weekends, they bag packed and volunteered at the Xmas party, committee meetings, the Bluebell walk fund raiser and joined the foster carers at day trips to Chessington and Butlins. Working with the ESFCA has bought the store colleagues closer as a team and has bought them a large amount of enjoyment as well as an amazing sense of pride.

The year with the ESFCA has been so much fun, that we have adopted them again for 2017.....



SIBLING SUNSHINE PROJECT



On Friday 24th March, 21 excited children and 8 nervous adults made their way to BUTLINS in Bognor Regis. This was the start of East Sussex Foster Care Association's (ESFCA) Sibling Sunshine project which aims to bring sibling groups together. The 21 children are part of 4 large sibling groups, who, because of the size of the family unit, are unable to live together in one foster family, thus leading to the children being separated from their siblings. The aim of this project was to bring the siblings together to allow them the opportunity to experience quality time together with their brothers and sisters and allow them the opportunity to build some positive, shared, childhood memories that they can take into adult life. This was achieved in a safe environment and the children were supported by Foster Carers and Social Workers

ESFCA are very grateful to Sussex Community Foundation for supporting this project and helping us to 'make dreams come true' for Looked After Children.

On arrival, we were shown to our accommodation which was large enough to allow most of the children to stay together. Sainsbury's in The Arndale Centre, Eastbourne,



"We would like to say thank you for organising such a fab weekend. The siblings all got along so well considering their usual contacts are limited to 2-3 hours and on occasion have needed to end nearer the 2 due to some of the children having difficulties. It was lovely seeing the children all play together in a natural environment and generally having fun. One of my girls who is usually lacking in resilience surprised me by going on the zip wire and go karts which was amazing."

Foster Carer

provided each apartment with a starter pack of goodies, including bread, Cheese, Ham, cakes, biscuits and drinks. The children were very excited to find the goody bags waiting for them in their accommodation. Thank you Sainsbury's. One group of siblings decided to make camps in the lounge so they could all sleep in the same room, under the watchful eye of a foster carer.



10 year old LAC -
"This was the best time of my life, it meant so much to be able to have my big brothers take care of me and we had so much fun together, but it also made me realise how much I love them and miss them."

As part of the package, breakfast and an evening meal was provided. One of the golden moments, was to see the large families sitting together sharing a meal, as for many of these children, this was the first time this had been achieved. The tables were full of laughter and lots of discussions about the experiences they had during the day as well as planning the next day's activities. Bultins was a perfect venue as it provided so much choice of activities and shows. Another highlight was the pool party on the Saturday evening. Most of the 21 looked after children choose to spend Saturday evening swimming and slipping down the many flumes. The pool area was filled with music and many of the kids were dancing together as the waves lapped over their bodies. Other activities included go-karting, climbing wall, high ropes, football coaching, dancing with the red coats to a

"A big thank you from G and myself for giving us the opportunity to spend some much needed quality time with the siblings. We packed in a week's worth of fun into just two days and we were exhausted when we got home, but well worth the yawns! Thank you for giving G some fantastic memories, we did bring a few bits back for her memory box so she will never forget the trip."

Foster Carer

morning exercise class, a disco and of course the fairground rides.

At the end of the weekend, the children returned home, exhausted, happy and full of precious memories. However, there was also some sadness as the children said goodbye and

some children spoke about the reality of 'this is what my life could have been like'. But this gave the foster carers and social workers the opportunity to talk openly about the feelings this raised with the children and we helped them make sense of their mixed emotions.

All the children spoke of a very special time together and how they wished this could happen again.



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.



East Sussex Foster Care Association

Inspire



During February half term ten young motivated 5 – 14 year olds had an action packed, fun filled and inclusive 3 day workshop in Bexhill. During this period they learnt a dance routine, sung songs and performed in a mini pantomime to foster carers. All of the ten individuals bought their own skills to the workshop and received a certificate for their fantastic efforts. Inspire was run by 3 highly skilled and trained professionals including 2 curriculum leaders in dance and drama at St Richards Catholic College.

It was wonderful to watch a group of young people of different ages learn new skills, gain so much confidence and make new friends. It really showed how far they had come at their final performance.

The feedback from all the young people was so positive and some of them had already planned play dates and swapped address to become pen pal friends. There were comments such as “I had a fabulous time and enjoyed every moment of it. I hope I can come back next year!” We will definitely be continuing more Inspire projects in the future for various ages at different locations for all to join in. 😊

“I had a fabulous time and enjoyed every moment of it. I hope I can come back next year!”

Stable connections through Intuitive Horses

ESFCA was delighted to receive Lottery funding for our new 'Stable Connections' Project. This project was intended for young people in Care, the experience of building relationships with horses to help them with friendships and other social skills as well as potentially helping them in areas such as impulse control, empathy, calming skills, and recognizing and working with feeling states. Carers were involved in the project and attended each session with the young person to help reinforce the work in-between sessions as well develop their bond together.



We were able to offer 6 sessions each to 25 looked after Children. Carers and Children gave very positive feedback. One child was asked if she would recommend this project to other children in the same situation as her. Her reply was very special 'NO - I want it all for myself'. Many carer spoke about the shared experience and how this has allowed them to open difficult conversation, particularly about feelings.



Her reply was very special 'NO - I want it all for myself'



East Sussex Foster Care Association

Panto Time

So once again, one of ESFCAs most popular annual events that everybody looks forward to in eager anticipation... “ Oh yes they do, oh no they don’t.”

A Saturday Matinee at the wonderful Devonshire

Park Theatre in Eastbourne, one of the best examples of a small Victorian Theatre in the whole Country, with its beautiful décor, boxes, interior and Foyer. Snow White was waiting with her seven Dwarfs for 80 adults, 118 children, 14 children with special Educational Needs and 1 care leaver so a total of 213 all got to experience this fantastic show.



*“ Oh yes they do,
oh no they don’t.”*

Sainsbury’s provided wonderful bags of sweet treats and bottles of water that were all handed out to the children.

The show was entertaining with lots of well-known songs the young people knew and could sing along to. (Don’t ask me the words though!)



The star of the show was Dame Dolly (Martyn Knight) and Herbie the Huntsman (Tucker) being the funniest comedian and getting the audience participation going, but equally so were a handful of our lovely children who got up on stage and did us all proud. The best bit loved by the Kids was when the cast came out on stage with giant water guns and drenched the audience with water; the children all wanted to get wet and are begging to sit near the front next year to get a soaking.

We were quite convinced that our treasurer, Chris, had become Grumpy.



Funding was sourced from The Greggs Foundation, plus a small donation from all attendees helped secure the seats for all to enjoy. A wonderful event loved by all.

Christmas Party 2016



Yet another successful Christmas party was held this year, thanks to the Kings centre again for allowing us to use their charity initiative. The party was supported by the Lewes and

Eastbourne Soroptimists who have become an integral part of the ESFCA Christmas party with their present wrapping activity. This is such an important experience for the children who not only receive gifts themselves but experience the joy of giving.

We have so many different people involved in supporting this event, each of whom plays an equally important role from the teenagers who support the face painting to Sainsbury's candy floss to foster carer's cake making. Raffle prizes and generous gifts from many different sources including the University of Brighton mince pies, Sussex University helium for the balloons. Perhaps the highlight of this year was Santa's sleigh loaned to us by the amazing Lions club which enabled Santa's entrance to be even more impressive than ever. Watching the children's faces was a treat to behold. These Christmas parties, which have been running for nearly 25 years, provide some of the best lasting memories for our young people.



East Sussex Foster Care Association

Bluebell Walk

ESFCA was invited to attend and run the cafe at The Arlington Bluebell Walk.

This event is a fantastic opportunity to see Bluebells at

their best; you can choose to have a short, medium or long walk, meet other carers and general public or just have a nice snack! The ESFCA funds the food to go for sale in the cafe and carers give their delicious home baked cakes/ biscuits/ muffins to be sold. Many carers volunteered to help at the café, from preparing sandwiches, cooking, washing-up to cleaning the venue at the end.



The venue also has a few "baby" animals so children can enjoy being close to them. The Blue Bell Farm allows us to have 2 days there and all profits from the café go to our children in care. If you would like to help with organising, baking, selling or simply helping with ideas, please contact us.

Plans for the Future

- ✦ Now you know what we have achieved, why not help us achieve more....
- ✦ Have you thought about becoming a volunteer, trustee or committee member?
- ✦ Support us to continue to support the looked after children and foster families registered with ESCC
- ✦ If you are a funder or grant giver why not support us to continue the work we do and enable us to reach more of the children and young people in looked after care within East Sussex

Please contact us if you are able to support us

Financial Review

East Sussex Foster Care Association

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

For the year ended 31 March 2017

| | Unrestricted funds £ | Restricted funds £ | 2017 Total £ | 2016 Total £ |
|--|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Incoming Resources | | | | |
| Donations | 2,112 | 1,393 | 3,505 | 622 |
| Core funding | 20,000 | - | 20,000 | 20,000 |
| Advocacy support | - | - | - | 2,665 |
| Subscriptions | - | - | - | 2,755 |
| Fundraising | 4,699 | - | 4,699 | 590 |
| Grants | - | 21,112 | 21,112 | 620 |
| Contributions towards events | - | - | - | 840 |
| Interest | 8 | - | 8 | 49 |
| Total incoming resources | 26,819 | 22,505 | 49,324 | 28,141 |
| Resources expended | | | | |
| Conference | - | - | - | 2,723 |
| Insurance | 509 | - | 509 | 493 |
| General running expenses | 700 | - | 700 | 173 |
| Pantomime | - | 1,863 | 1,863 | 4,419 |
| Holiday project & PGL | - | 6,326 | 6,326 | 2,857 |
| Disability holiday | - | 880 | 880 | - |
| Performing arts project | - | 632 | 632 | 1,916 |
| Day trips & Sibling Sunshine Days | 253 | 4,863 | 5,116 | 5,414 |
| Intuitive Horse | - | 2,550 | 2,550 | - |
| Advocacy support | - | 4,293 | 4,293 | 902 |
| Salaries & pensions | 9,159 | - | 9,159 | 8,848 |
| Christmas party | - | 815 | 815 | 125 |
| Computer costs | 200 | 52 | 252 | 170 |
| Training | 30 | - | 30 | 1,376 |
| Accountants fees | 1,688 | - | 1,688 | 1,067 |
| Total outgoing resources | 12,539 | 22,274 | 34,813 | 30,483 |
| Net incoming/(outgoing) resources for the year/ Net income/(expenditure) for the year | 14,280 | 231 | 14,511 | (2,342) |
| Transfers | (2,093) | 2,093 | - | - |
| Total funds brought forward | 37,160 | 19,090 | 56,250 | 58,592 |
| Total incoming resources | 49,347 | 21,414 | 70,761 | 56,250 |



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Funders and Supporters 2016-2017

The trustees and committee would like to thank the following funders for their support during this year:

- ★ East Sussex County Council
- ★ East Sussex foster carers who make monthly donations to our charity (Dearman Family, Castell Family and Ware Family)
- ★ Austin and Hope Pilkington
- ★ Sussex Community Foundation - Sibling Sunshine Project
- ★ Murphy
- ★ Merlin's Magic Wand
- ★ Lottery - Awards for All - Stable Connections Project
- ★ Sainsburys (Eastbourne Arndale Centre)
- ★ Eastbourne Football Club
- ★ Santander - PGL
- ★ Pilkington
- ★ Greggs - Pantomime
- ★ Bluebell Walk
- ★ Verity Masonic Charities - Christmas Party
- ★ Punnett's Town School
- ★ Lewes and Eastbourne Soroptimists
- ★ Children in Need - PGL
- ★ Kings Centre Eastbourne