

Foreword



I'm delighted to introduce the first foster carers newsletter. These editions will go out to all foster carers approximately every three months. I hope they will be really useful, in allowing you to be informed with valuable information, keep you updated with the latest news from the fostering team and making sure you are in the know with any fun events and activities for all of the family to get involved with. We welcome your input and ideas for content so please contact the marketing team (Details at the back) with any ideas you have.

I'd like to show my appreciation to you for your dedication in welcoming children into your homes and into your families. I understand that being a foster carer is a varied and challenging role, you are having such a positive effect on children and young people's lives and we absolutely value all that you are doing.

Interim Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education

Lisa Lyons



Sefton Fostering's New Logo

We are excited to launch the Fostering Service's new logo. We hope you'll agree the bright new colours and design is much more eye catching and fun. It will allow people to instantly recognise us when they see the logo out and about.

Thank you to all of you who got involved in this development. We couldn't have done this without the invaluable insight from some of our carers who shared ideas and experiences. This input helped us change and refine the designs and wording in order to represent these views.

Watch this space as we will be using this new logo to launch a new campaign to encourage more foster carers to come to Sefton. As part of the campaign we will be collating real images and stories from carers and their families. If you would like to be involved, please contact charlene.smith@sefton.gov.uk and she will let you know what opportunities there are.

Refer a friend

We recognise that foster carers are great advocates for Sefton and we really appreciate how you speak highly of the service and encourage people to think about fostering with us, whether it be friends, relatives or people who you know would be great foster carers. To show how valuable this is to us, we have increased the 'Refer a Friend' offer to £500 if a person you have referred is approved as a carer. To begin the process, please ask whoever you are referring to make their enquiry through our website, choose the 'Refer a Friend' option and add your name.



Kinship Care Week

From the 4th – 10th we celebrated Kinship carer week, a National week to raise awareness about the amazing work all the grandparents, brother, sisters, aunts, uncles, other relatives and friends are doing to support children and young people. You truly are making a difference to children's lives.

We massively value all of your hard work and dedication. As a small token of our appreciation

our PSW's delivered some boxes of Heroes to our wonderful Kindship Heroes.

Kinship Carers Support



Kinship is the national kinship care charity. They want kinship carers and the children they are raising to be recognised, valued and supported. Kinship has been commissioned by Sefton local authority to offer **FREE** emotional and practical support with:

- Unlimited information from our Information and Advice team.
 - Access to a virtual support group which runs fortnightly, alternating between day and evening sessions via Zoom platform.
 - 1 to 1 peer buddying – receiving a series of supportive telephone calls from a trained kinship volunteer who has experienced similar issues and who is a 'little further in their journey' and more settled.
- An opportunity for carers to be part of our kinship community.

There is a dedicated phone number **0300 033 9851** which has been set up for Wirral and Sefton carers and staff to use to get **priority access between 10am to 2pm Monday to Thursday.**

Sons and Daughters

Sons and Daughters Month



It's so important for us to recognise and say a big 'thank you' to all of our children whose parents foster. They really are a testament to you as they welcome many children who are scared and vulnerable, into their homes, make them feel safe and secure and help them fit right in as part of the family. For those who have given permission we are sending certificates to your children to take pride of place at home.

We also have events organised to take the children of parents who foster for a ride on the 'Pride of Sefton' Community Canal Boat. We will set sail from the Albert Dock to Brunswick Dock and back again. Once on board there will be games and activities and the children will have a chance to steer the helm as they gain some basic sailing training. Snacks and drinks will be provided, and we will also be having lunch from the world-famous Dockland Chippy!

The Voices of Sons and Daughter's

In the lead up to Son's and Daughters Month Sefton heard from 12 children from Fostering Families who spoke about how fostering impacts their life.

Angela Siteo Sefton Fostering's Training Development Officer, conducted the survey and said:

"I was bowled over reading the children's experiences and by how generous and welcoming they are. It is clear this can be difficult at times. Thanks to all who support the children in our foster families to be open, loving and where possible make life long connections."

The children told us

It is wonderful to take care of the children and make sure they are ok. Although just like all brothers and sisters they can be annoying, but you have to understand their needs and forgive them

"It can be tough at times but rewarding watching them become their own person and finding the things they love"

They explained that the extra rules, lots of visitors to the house could be hard. The biggest impact was seeing their parents time and attention divided.

"It's hard to do clubs sometimes and me and my mum don't get to spend as much time together as we used to"

Some children described the buzz of meeting new children and how it brought their family closer,

"I get really excited when I think people are coming"

"You can meet someone completely new and have them become part of the family"

"We do more as a family"

Paul's Foster Family – Sons and Daughters Month



Read this heart-warming story sent into us by Paul. He wanted to share his experience about how his children have really embraced foster care.

"When we were considering fostering, one of the main things we wanted to ensure was that it was going to be the right thing for our own children as well as any children we looked after.

"We have 3 birth children, boys aged 7, 13 and 15.

"We involved them at every stage of the assessment process and still continue to. Before we take on any new children we sit down as

a family and discuss the placement. To us we are not just Foster parents we are a Foster Family.

"Here we are now, 3 years in and I can honestly say that all of the children we have looked after have enhanced our family and that is by a large part due to our Sons welcoming new children into our home and looking after them in their own small ways that have made such a huge difference. Our older children play football in the garden and our younger child plays with them with his toys and games. This really has helped the Fostered children settle in much quicker and has helped our Sons too, with confidence and sense of pride, particularly our youngest who is proud to say he is a Foster family.



"It so important to involve your birth children as it affects them in a huge way too. They do sacrifice a lot sharing not only their toys, but their parents too. For this reason, Sons and Daughters week is one of the biggest weeks in the year for Foster families.

"Thank you to all of the Sons and daughters of all of the foster families for the fantastic work and sacrifice you make."

It's so important that we include the voices and experiences of foster carers in the newsletter. To share your story please get in touch with charlene.smith@sefton.gov.uk

Great offers for carers

Services across Sefton Council have come together to explore some great opportunities for carers and the whole family to enjoy events, activities and fun days out, for free or for a fraction of the price. This includes services such as Libraries, Leisure, Culture/Events and Green Sefton.

An example of this was the amazing offer we received from Southport's tourism team of 200 free tickets for the British Musical Fireworks event in September. Our plan is to bring together the opportunities which are available year on year and develop a fun packed programme designed for foster carers and the whole family.

You'll be hearing more about these plans in the coming months but in the mean time here are a few offers which have already been agreed upon.

Green Sefton Golf Offer

Keep fit and active whilst having fun with FREE Golf Membership for the whole family for Bootle or Southport Golf Course. Memberships include Foster Carers, Foster Children and Birth Children.

Southport Golf Links

Park Road West

Southport

PR9 0JS

Tel: 01704 535 286

Bootle Golf Club

Dunning's Bridge Road

Bootle

L30 2PP

Tel: 0151 928 1371

If you would like to take advantage of this offer, please decide which course you would prefer and then let your social worker know.

Green Sefton Ranger Offer

Enjoy walks or activities with Green Sefton on the glorious Sefton coast and help keep the borough clean, green and beautiful.

The offer includes

- Free two-hour coastal walks with a Green Sefton ranger where you can enjoy and learn more about the wildlife and landscapes.
- Beach cleaning session. Help keep the coast tidy whilst having fun on Sefton's beautiful Ainsdale Beach.

We are waiting for more dates for these activities but please tell your social worker if you are interested joining.



Stable Lives

The Fostering Team have established an exciting new partnership with a local charity, [Stable Lives \(Equestrian Centre\)](#) who are based in Parbold, Lancashire.

The charity is now offering a 6-week bespoke programme for up to 5 foster children and 2 respite days for up to 10 foster children, across the year.

This is an amazing opportunity as the children and young people visiting will experience the therapeutic benefits which caring for

horses bring. This includes grooming, feeding, bonding and nurturing relationships with the horses.

Foster Carers Virtual Meeting

We would love you to join Sefton's Foster Carers virtual meetings which take place virtually, once a month. The meeting not only gives you the chance to meet and chat to other carers and the fostering team, but it provides a safe space for you to share experiences, raise issues and receive the latest updates and guidance from the team.

Future Dates:

Tuesday 30th November 6.30-7.30

Tuesday 14th December 10am -11am

To join please contact: Maria.Spatuzzi@sefton.gov.uk

Training Opportunities

If you haven't already done so, we would encourage all carers to join the courses detailed below as they are crucial for your learning journey as a foster carer.

23 Nov Recording 10am-1pm

What do you need to record as foster carers

How do you capturing the young person's experience in your records

How do foster carers records fit with a child's life story work?

What happens when the young person leaves your care?

Sharing records with social workers over secure platform

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

7 Dec Safety in the home 10am-1pm

Keeping your home safe in line with children's development

Why children with developmental delay may be more prone to accidents

How to keep your home safe from fire and escape plans (Merseyside Fire and Rescue)

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

To book please contact: Angela.Siteo@sefton.gov.uk

Foster Carers expense claims have gone digital

In March the Provider Portal was launched which provides you with access to make an expenses claim/ to view your upcoming payments, replace your paper fortnightly remittance and even produces your annual tax report.

For anyone one who's not already set up an account the Provider Portal can be accessed via this link - https://www.providerportal.sefton.gov.uk/ProviderPortal_ICS_Live/Home.aspx.

Your logon is the email address that you have provided to Sefton and your temporary first time password is password1. Which you will be prompted to change.

If you have any further questions about the portal or what can be claimed for, contact your supervising social worker who will be able to provide further guidance.

Digital Champions – Have got this

In each edition of the foster carer's newsletter our 'Digital Champions, Vernon and Angela will be keeping you updated and helping you get to grips with latest technology and software that will be helpful to you. They will also be giving some hints and tips to help you and your family use devices without having to be concerned about any risks.



UKCIS Digital Passport

Angela: I'd like to recommend using [UKCIS Digital Passport](#) which is a new initiative specifically designed for children in care and their carers.

The Digital Passport is a really simple tool which addresses many of the issues around a child's online presence and what they are actually doing online. The Digital Passport belongs to the looked after child and they can take responsibility for it and for who can see it - as long as at least one of those people is a trusted adult.

I especially like the 'Our agreement about my Digital Life' section which discusses when the child is able to go online and makes the expectations of the Child and Carer very clear. I feel that this could prevent some of the conflicts, about time spent online, between children and adults.



Safety Online

Vernon: Hey there I'd like to share some advice I have on how to filter your internet to help keep your family safe online.

Protecting your family from harmful content on the Internet is a must. In the UK there are several agencies and charities working on your behalf to help you stay safe online. They maintain several lists which are used to provide filtering services to protect you from harmful content such as Child Abuse Imagery and Terrorist content. In addition, Internet Service Providers often have other lists to block services to topics such as gambling, pornography or illegal downloads.

- To quickly test your internet filters on your home broadband and mobile network, go to the free website <http://testfiltering.com/personal>.
- For step-by-step instructions to set controls on the major broadband providers and mobile networks see this link

(www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/broadband-mobile) at Internet Matters.

Remember that determined children can always find a way around our best attempts to keep them safe so always keep an eye on what they are doing online.

Egress

As foster carers we need to communicate across social care about personal and delicate matters effecting the children and their family.

Sefton Council uses Egress to ensure messages are sent securely.

To support carers, I have put together this step by step user guide.

<https://seftonfostering.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/FC-Egress-Guide.pdf>

This can also be found on the resources section of Sefton Fostering Services Website [here](#)

North Sefton Support Group

The North Sefton Foster carers support group are now meeting face to face again every 2nd month. In between we will continue to meet on zoom. This is a great group & a great way to meet fellow foster carers. It is a time to share knowledge & ideas, to discuss issues & to enjoy a nice cup of tea/ coffee with biscuits or fruit in a relaxed atmosphere. Children are always welcome & there are toys & changing facilities available for them.

The dates of the meetings are

- Nov 16th 10-12 at Lakeside Church. Marine drive. Southport.
- Dec 7th 10.30 via zoom. The zoom code will be sent out the day before.
- Jan 11th 10-12 at Lakeside. Southport
- Feb 8th 10.30 via Zoom
- March 8th 10-12 at Lakeside. Southport
- April 12th via zoom.

If anyone has any questions or would like someone to talk to then our contact numbers are

Maria Spatuzzi - Maria.Spatuzzi@sefton.gov.uk

Note from the Marketing Team



We want to make sure that we are always listening to your views and your experiences and telling your stories. This includes articles, newsletter, social media and brand developments and much more. If you want to be involved please contact either charlene.smith@sefton.gov.uk or helen.collins@sefton.gov.uk

We would also urge you to add Sefton to your social media platforms, in order to see all of the great content going out. Please add, like and share. Let's make sure as many people as possible know what amazing things our fostering community is doing!

Charlene and Helen

Facebook: Search 'SeftonFostering' or 'onesefton'

Twitter: Search seftoncouncil

Instagram: Search 'sefton_council'

Useful contacts

Emergency Duty Team (EDT) - 0151 934 3555

Duty fostering – 0151 934 4060

Finance – Phil.Pimblett@sefton.gov.uk and Linda.Cain@sefton.gov.uk

Events and Activities

Bookstart gives free books to every child at two key stages before school, as well as free packs for children with additional needs, tips and guidance on reading together, resources and activities, and much more.

Packs are available at all Sefton Libraries. Membership is not required

Atkinson Christmas Panto

Get ready to go to the ball and join the Atkinson for a spellbinding Christmas Panto starring Claire Sweeney as Fair Godmother.

Friday 10th Dec – Sunday 2nd Jan

Tickets vary £13 full price. Buy tickets [here](#)

Victoria Park Light Trail

A spectacular after dark light trail will be coming to Southport, Victoria Park from the 25th November to the 23rd December from 4.30pm each night.

Tickets via the website www.luminate.live