



Foreword

Hello, I would like to introduce myself and let you know about some of the developments we are working on in the fostering service. I started as the Interim Service Manager for Fostering at the beginning of December. I have worked in a number of Local Authorities undertaking different roles in Children's Services which includes managing fostering services. I live in Wirral and so am quite local to Sefton.

We are excited that Sefton's Fostering Service has restructured to include 4 teams.

Team 1 - Mainstream Recruitment & Assessment – Jennifer Walkerdine

Marketing and Publicity, Information Events, Initial Enquiries, Expressions of Interest, Stage 1 and 2 Assessments, Fostering Panel, Training.

Team 2 - Kinship/SGO Assessment – Donna Kelly

Viability Assessments, CAS, Family Group Meetings, Connected Carer Assessments, Special Guardianship Assessments, Fostering Panel, Training.

Team 3 - Mainstream Support, Supervision & Review – Maria Spatuzzi

Supervisory support, unannounced visits, Annual Reviews, Panel presentation, allegations, Training and Development, Celebratory Events, Foster Care Engagement (Groups and Forums)

Team 4 - Kinship/SGO/Adoption Support, Supervision & Review – Michelle Tomlinson

Supervisory support, unannounced visits, annual Reviews, panel presentation, allegations, Training and Development, Celebratory Events, Engagement (Groups and Forums)

We are also pleased to have formed a Fostering Improvement Board which takes place once a month and involves members of our fostering community including foster carers, individuals from the fostering team and senior members.

This board provides an opportunity to bring together representatives from different parts of the fostering service to provide direction and engagement around development, compliance, and performance of the service. The aim is to achieve on going improvements, promote good practice and positive outcomes for Children in Care and their carers.

The Service recently assessed itself against the Fostering National Minimum Standards, to ensure we comply and to identify areas which need further development.

An Improvement Plan has been written and was shared with the Fostering Service Improvement Board who will oversee and monitor progress.

As well as keeping you updated it is really important that the voice of foster carers is heard as we progress on our journey. Over the next few weeks, I will be seeking your views about the current forums in place for engaging with the service.

I have had a very warm welcome since joining Sefton and I am looking forward to working closely with you all.

Simon Fisher, Interim Service Manager.



Meet Jennifer Walkerdine

Our new Team Manager, Mainstream Assessment

Hi everyone, some of you will know me as a supervising social worker, others still will remember me from my previous life as a children's social worker. I am thrilled to now be involved with recruiting and assessing new additions to our wonderful team of foster carers. I'd also like to say a big thank you to those carers who have supported us with our Everyday Angels campaign, your input makes a huge difference.



Meet Michelle Tomlinson

Our new Team Manager, Kinship/SGO support

Hello, some foster carers will already know me as I was team manager in the Corporate Parenting Service for a number of years. Myself and my newly appointed assistant Tracy Millward are looking forward to developing the Special Guardianship offer and support to Special Guardians and Kinship foster carers for Sefton. We will keep everyone updated over the next few months as the service develops.

Improved Foster Carers Offer

As part of our commitment to improving the existing foster carers lifestyle offer for you and your fostering families, we have teamed up with services across the Council to introduce some great opportunities, with further plans due to be announced.

Sefton's Libraries

A Sefton's Carer Offer has been produced by Library Services and is aimed at supporting those working in a carer role. It includes a Sefton's Carer's ticket which covers every member of the household and has added benefits such as a longer loan period of up to 56 days instead of 21 and no fines charged for late returns. All carers will have received a pack, but you can also find it in the attachments in the newsletters email.

Lifestyles

We would like to offer you Free Activate Fitness membership for the entire family to enjoy. This includes foster carers, birth, and foster children. (Gym membership is accessible to young people 11 +)

The membership includes access to six facilities within Sefton, with over 200 classes a week, taught by some of the leading instructors in the region, 3 pools, a 400m running track, a cycling track and a lake.

For more info and to register, just call the Membership Team on 0151 934 2297

#EverydayAngel Campaign



We are delighted that our new #EverydayAngel campaign has got off to a fantastic start after it launched at the beginning of January. Through the campaign, we wanted to show our appreciation to you, our #EverydayAngels, for all the fantastic work you do and for care you provide.

We understand foster carers don't see themselves this way but your dedication and support, means to us and many of our vulnerable children, you are our 'Angels'.

The campaign also urges people to think about fostering and become an #EverydayAngel with Sefton. We think you'll agree, the new content is eye catching and vibrant and it has received a great response on social media and from the public out and about.

Thank you so much to the amazing foster families who got involved in creating the videos and images. It's wonderful to be able to give people some real insight into life as a foster carer.

Please keep liking, sharing and spreading the word about our need for more carers.



Keep an eye out as we'll continue to share fresh campaign content over the coming months.



Return of Kids Club



We are really happy that our much loved 'Kids Club' events are beginning to return after a break due to COVID-19.

'Kids Club' allows foster children to come together in a safe environment to take part in activities such as artwork, playing games or sports and days out.

The club has already enjoyed a day out at the cinema, bowling, and a trip to Liverpool City Centre for a meal. Further activities are due to be organised for half term.

Placement Support Officer Thomas Coffey said, "We see massive changes in the children when they come to the club. It helps them settle, build friendships, and speak about things that are personal to them with children who are often going through similar situations. This then helps them to build their confidence and understand that they are not alone."

If you would like to find out more, please contact Thomas.Coffey@sefton.gov.uk

Stable Lives

Since the establishment of a partnership with local charity, Stable Lives (Equestrian Centre), lots of children have enjoyed visiting the centre to take part in some exciting activities, including riding, grooming, and bonding with the horses.

Sefton Placement Support Officer, Marie Cousins said, "The children have really enjoyed these days with some of them to hoping to return to complete other courses which the centre run. Stable Lives offers a safe place where children can relax and connect with the horses and nature. The children develop a relationship of trust and compassion with the horses and it's so lovely to see."



Child's Feedback, "I like learning how to trot and canter and also built a bird box. I enjoyed meeting new people and making new friends. I would like to come back in the summer holidays"

Sefton's Virtual School

Statistics show that children with stable foster homes generally do better in education. Our foster carers get children to school, support learning and help to build aspirations for their future. The Virtual School is here to champion the education of all children in the care of the Local Authority, and we offer support, advice, and training to all carers.

Every child in care is entitled to a current and robust Personal Education Plan (PEP), and we encourage carers to be involved in the process. Please find more information on our advice sheet attached or contact Virtual School Head, Mary.Palin@sefton.gov.uk.

Meet Cheryl the new Participation Officer

I am excited to be joining Children's Social Care as Participation Officer, supporting the engagement of children and young people with the services they receive from Sefton Council. I'm looking forward to working with staff and carers to develop new and creative ways we can engage with children and young people to ensure their voices are heard and that they play an active role in shaping the way our services are delivered.

I will keep you updated on any future activities for children and young people but I'd like to highlight two 'Youth Councils' which young people can join and be a part of.



Youth Ambassadors

Young people aged 11-15 years who meet every two weeks to discuss the issues that matter to young people in care. The group have been involved in a number of exciting projects including the design of Young People's Guides, Sefton Pledge and Monthly Awards.

Making A Difference (MAD)

Young people aged 16+ meet regularly and have been involved in a number of exciting projects and consultations. Representatives from the group sit on the Corporate Parenting Board and are involved in interviewing new staff. Group members receive payment for their contributions.

If you have any questions or know any young people who would like to join us, please get in touch.

Cheryl.yates@sefton.gov.uk

Training plans get personal

Every fostering household should have a Personal Development Plan about how necessary training will be met over the coming year. The plan should also contain information about any training needs you may have, including accessibility.

As part of the process for assessing new foster carers, we will now be introducing PDPs before people are approved.

For current carers, instead of waiting for your Annual Review, social workers will be speaking to you as soon as possible about your plans for training for 2022.

This will not only help you keep track of your training history and plans, but it will give us a clear picture of when mandatory courses need to be renewed and which courses are needed for carers hoping to complete level 1 or 2.

If you haven't already completed your Personal Development Plan, your worker will ask you at your next visit.

Don't forget to let us know if there is training you would like to attend but can't see it on the plan. We might be able to signpost you to other courses or plan to include it next year.

Striving to be Thriving

'Striving to be Thriving' is a new practice tool that has been developed in Sefton and allows carers to reflect and consider how they can support children with their independence and encourage children to gain independent living skills while living with them.

It also aims to encourage opportunities for conversations about the achievements and aspirations of children in your care.

The new framework will be discussed within your supervision and reviews so please take a look and get ready to chat about the areas where your children are shining or finding challenges.

Striving to be Thriving In Childhood, Adolescence & Adulthood (seftonfostering.co.uk)

Hearing the voice of babies

Sefton Local Safeguarding board in conjunction with the Specialist Safeguarding Midwife is offering some really useful training for all who work with or care for infants.

'Hearing the voice of babies' covers;

- Why the first 1001 days are so critical.
- How lockdown has affected babies.
- Noticing how babies communicate.
- Understanding the Safeguarding services that are in place for babies and their families in Sefton.

The course will take place on 14th March, 9.30-12pm via Teams

Please book directly here or email angela.siteo@sefton.gov.uk

University of York's Programme for Foster Carers



The University of York's Access and Outreach team are in the process of developing a new online programme aimed at foster carers called 'Supporting the Supporters'. The programme aims to increase foster carers' knowledge of higher education, so they feel better able to support young people to make informed choices.

They are currently gathering thoughts on the programme, including the suggested content and structure. If you'd like to speak to them about the course, either to ask questions or provide your thoughts, please email Vanessa Conman at outreach-independent-student@york.ac.uk

Foster Carers Support Group

The Foster Carer Support Group are encouraging people to join them as they have released new dates for their group meetings. This is a very friendly, relaxed support group run by foster carers for foster carers. The aim is to provide a safe space to come together, offer support, advice, share experiences and be a listening ear to each other.

Group meeting dates:

• 8th Feb • 30th March • 11th May • 7th June • 13th July

Fostering Service Support Group

After a great response from people joining our Fostering Support Group last year, we are delighted to share new dates running till the end of this year. The meetings will take place on a Tuesday, once a month. They will be facilitated by the Fostering Team, including a Supervising Social Worker and Michelle Tomlinson.

The aim of the group is to invite various professionals from in and around the service to discuss their roles and be available for any questions you may have. Please let us know if you have any suggestions about possible speakers.

The link for the Teams meeting will be sent via your email nearer the time please keep an eye out. Please contact Maria.Spatuzzi@sefton.gov.uk to book on or to find out more.

January 25th, 10am-11am

February 22nd, 6pm-7pm

March 22nd, 10am-11am

April 26th, 6pm-7pm

May 24th, 10am-11am

June 21st, 6pm-7pm

July 26th, 10am-11am

August 23rd, 6pm-7pm

September 20th, 10am-11am

October 25th, 6pm-7pm

November 22nd, 10am-11am

December 13th, 6pm-7pm

Sefton's Digital Champions, Portal Provider Advice



In each Foster Carers Newsletter our Digital Champions, Vernon and Angela give hints and tips about the technology and software that will be helpful to you.

Hello everyone. We understand many carers may not be clear about the Provider Portal and what its function is, so here's a quick overview of the online portal and what it does to help our carers.

You can access the Provider Portal via this link -

https://www.providerportal.sefton.gov.uk/ProviderPortal_ICSLive/Home.aspx.

The Provider Portal will allow you to make a claim, view your upcoming payments, replace your paper fortnightly remittance, and produce your annual tax report.

Save this link to your internet favourites. (Note: if you have any security settings set up on your personal computer device, don't forget to allow this link).

If you have any issues accessing the Provider Portal or require any support such as password resets you can contact the payments team via email at carerpayments@sefton.gov.uk (please use Egress encryption if you provide personal or client information). If you have questions about what can be claimed for, contact your supervising social worker who will be able to help you.

Note from the Marketing Team:

We really do welcome any feedback about the campaigns or materials that we are producing, including this newsletter. If you would like to give your views about how we can develop or improve these, or if you would like to get involved, please contact either charlene.smith@sefton.gov.uk or helen.collins@sefton.gov.uk

We also urge you to add Sefton to your social media platforms, in order to see all of the content going out. Please add, like and share, share share!

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

The Wizard of Oz

The St Luke's Players are proud to present The Wizard of Oz.

Come and see this family fun pantomime at St Luke's Church in Crosby.

17th – 20th March – Times vary

Adults £9/Child £7

Book [here](#);

VUK Queen Tribute Band

Join top U.K Queen Tribute band for an intimate evening performed live. Experience classic hits such as Bohemian Rhapsody, We Will Rock You and I Want to Break Free.

Venue - Range High School Arts Theatre in Formby.

Sat, 19 March 2022

19:00 – 22:00 GMT

Ticket Prices £16

Book [here](#);