



Welcome to the 2011 Support After Adoption newsletter! The Government are again focusing on adoption and have re-issued the statutory guidance issued after the Adoption and Children Act came into force in 2005 and also the adoption minimum standards dating previously from 2003. There are some welcome clarifications about post-adoption support and recommendations for our work with adopted adults and birth relatives as well as for work with adopted children. One such requirement, for example, is that every agency produces a guide to adoption support suitable for children. We shall be working on this and other advice over the coming months. Alongside this government focus there is a lot of coverage of adoption in the media at the moment. You will find consideration of some programmes and articles inside this newsletter.

We also take the opportunity to review some books which we hope will be of interest, to publish an account of one person's experience of growing up adopted, and to update you on developments in the world of adoption support in Nottinghamshire. The young people's newsletter with accounts of fantastic achievements by adopted young people and news of their activities will come to all adoptive families with this main newsletter. Let us know if you haven't had a copy and would like one.

As always we would be happy to hear your views about the newsletter and to have your contributions for future editions. So please read and enjoy!

Pat and Jane, Team Managers

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A Home for Maisie

- therapeutic support for adoptive families

You may have seen the recent BBC 'fly on the wall' documentary which followed the adoption of an 8 year old girl, Maisie, by an experienced adoptive family. Several of the team here watched it and we felt it did give a real sense of some of the challenges presented to adoptive families today, and recognised the need for appropriate professional support over a period of time. The documentary showed some of Maisie's and her adoptive parents' therapeutic sessions at Family Futures, an independent agency in London, and we wanted to take the opportunity to remind you that we have local therapeutic services specifically for adoptive families here in Nottinghamshire provided by the Adopted and Looked After Child and Adolescent Mental Health service (CAMHS). This service works closely with Support After Adoption and is able to offer understanding and professional input on attachment and trauma issues, understanding which is often so important for you and your child. The Adopted and Looked after Children CAMHS service is a free service.

Should you feel your family is in need of therapeutic support, please contact SAA to discuss or ask your GP to make a referral.

Young People's Activity Days

Dates for your diary

8-12 year olds

Thursday 11th and Friday 12th August 2011
Wednesday 26th October 2011
Wednesday 4th April 2012

13-18 year olds

Wednesday 3rd and Thursday 4th August 2011
Thursday 22nd December 2011
Thursday 12th April 2012

Social networking and Adoption

Further to Jenny Jackson's article in the last newsletter, social networking continues to have a huge impact on adoption as more adopted teens turn to the Internet to trace and contact birth family.

Adoptive families can be shocked to discover that their teenager has been having secret contact with birth relatives. And, in many cases, online communication leads to phone calls and face-to-face meetings.

Youngsters are driven by curiosity and, without thinking through the possible consequences, their communication with birth relatives can spiral out of control. This can be destabilising and disturbing for young people and adopters.

Birth relatives may present a very different version of events from the one the adopted young person has been told, making them feel confused or angry.

Here are some precautions which can protect your child's online identity:

- use the privacy settings on social networking site to restrict access to personal information
- limit the information provided on the public profile (e.g. don't make publicly available any information such as mobile phone number, address, school or photographs that could identify the location)

- never accept random requests from people who want to become a 'friend' on Facebook – it may be a birth relative – which would allow access to personal information.

If your child wants to be found or is actively looking, there is little you can do to prevent it. As adoptive parents you can, however, talk to your child about what might happen and how they would react. You can ask them what they want to know and tell them yourself, if you can, or promise to help them find out - perhaps by contacting SAA.

High quality, truthful life story work which doesn't paint a rosy picture is vital for every adopted child. Continue talking to your child about adoption and birth family in a way that meets their need to know more as they get older, and bring a more adult understanding to their histories.

It's better to be involved and be able to support your child than for them to feel the only way they can find out more is to do it in secret.

Additional Online Community users' experiences can be found on Adoption UK's message board.

Highly recommended reading is BAAF's 'Facing up to Facebook' (available in libraries in the adoption collection).

Adoption Learning has run courses on cyber bullying and keeping safe online and hope to do so again (budgets permitting!) Keep a look out for these!





→ Climbing at Bilsthorpe, summer 2011

Young People's Events **Update**

Great news! We have recently secured funding to continue with our programme of activity days for adopted young people, aged 8-12 and 13 - 18. The next activity days will be during the summer holiday period - see page 2 for the dates.

Over the last year we held some summer events at The Mill Adventure Base, where young people had the chance to take part in a variety of climbing, sailing, kayaking and art activities.

Events were also held at Bilsthorpe Young People's Centre where there were lots of art, climbing and team activities on offer and also a trip to Conkers with an opportunity to build a shelter and have a go at orienteering.

A further event was held in December when we offered a mixture of Christmas crafts and a record and produce your own 'song' workshop.

If your child has not attended an activity day before and is interested in coming along, please feel free to contact us for a chat or look out for the information arriving in the post. Maybe you would like to pop along and visit us at an activity to see what's on offer.

We have for a number of years now worked in partnership with the youth service delivering the activity days. Due to the re-organisation within the youth service, your child may see some new workers at our 8-12 age group events.

We would like to express our grateful thanks to John Alvey and his team of workers, from the under 14's youth service, for all their hard work and dedication over the years in supporting our activity days and enabling the days to be a huge success.

If you have any queries about the activity days please contact:

Allison Lindley 01623 437227 /
07834941221/
allison.lindley@nottssc.gov.uk

Julianne Tring 01623411300 /
07818015817
julianne.tring@nottssc.gov.uk

A year on in the Adoption Teams

Sharon Saunders, Family worker, Specialist Family Support Service



A year ago I wrote an article regarding my new role within the Adoption teams based at Chadburn House.

Well a year on and I am still here, and what a busy year I have had!

“The aim of the role was to support parents and children to experience a secure family placement with strong attachments to give the children opportunity to enjoy their childhood, succeed in education and reach their full potential”.

I have supported families in many different ways over the last year.

Here are some examples:

For adopters, who have just had a child or two, placed with them, I have supported them with the adjustments to parenting, routines and behaviour management.

Direct work with a child who may have been with their adoptive family for some time and the child has needed to re-look at their life-story and make sense of their past experiences.

Direct work with a child, who may be struggling in school or at home and needs some support with self esteem, identity, and to express their wishes and feelings.

This kind of work is done with parents and carers alongside to support the family as a whole.

Theraplay has been used with families and has been a great success in building the foundations of strong attachments through play.

If you think, I or the Specialist Family Support Service could support your family, discuss this with SAA or with me at Chadburn House.

Sharon



→ Some 2010 Pals

PALS continue to make a difference

Support After Adoption’s PALS scheme continues to be a success. But don’t just take our word for it – we asked the people on the receiving end of the service – the young people themselves, as well as their parents and their referring social workers. All 3 groups reported high levels of satisfaction with the scheme. Benefits noted were that young people and their parents and siblings have an opportunity for separate time and the advantage of the young person having someone external to talk with. Involving young people in activities they enjoy, helping to increase their social skills, confidence and self esteem, were also valued. Positive comments were also made about individual PALS as well as about the organisation of the scheme:

“Our PAL has really made a positive impact on our situation. There have been desperate times when knowing he was coming to take our son out helped us get through the day”

(Parent)

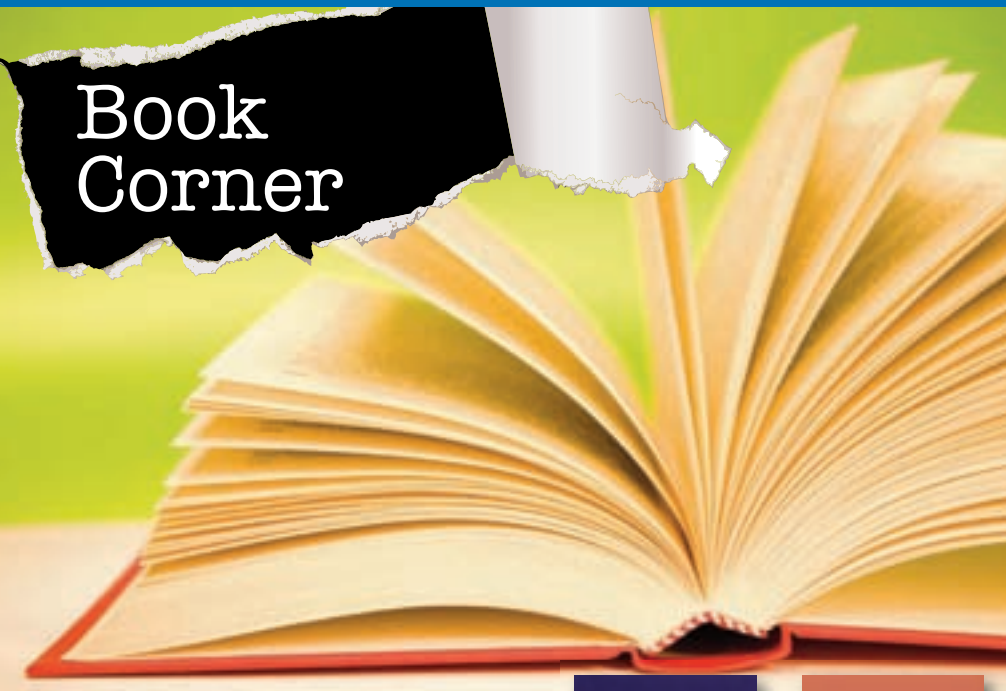
The main suggestion for improvements was to have more PALS for more hours. We will be able to consider this if funding becomes available.

“J. is really helpful. She’s just like my Mum, there for us when we need her. She’s great”

(Young Person)

Alyson Pinske, PALS co-ordinator

Book Corner

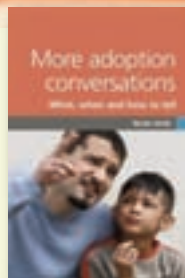
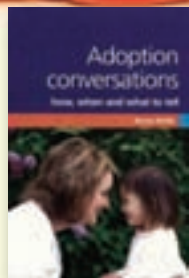


On telling:

Here are two new British Association of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) publications which I think are really useful: 'Adoption conversations: What, when and how to tell' and its companion 'More adoption conversations: What, when and how to tell', both by Renee Wolfs. The first book covers children under 12 and the second 10 to 18 year olds.

Renee is a Dutch journalist who has adopted three children from China. Although her books focus primarily on children adopted from abroad, I think most of what she covers is relevant to any adopted child.

Renee's own experience of adoptive parenting has convinced her that compared to birth parents, adoptive parents need to be equipped with even more effective ways to communicate with their children about certain issues and that it is the quality of that communication which is so important. She offers a wealth of practical advice about this. So for example there are chapters on conversation techniques – being sensitive and responsive to your individual child -, on different ways of talking about adoption and on different ways of responding to your child's own questions. And she tackles directly how to talk about the most



difficult and painful of background histories such as rape, incest, severe psychiatric problems and addictions.

'More adoption conversations' expands on these themes and applies advice and techniques offered in the first book to parenting adopted teens. Renee writes vividly about how negative emotions such as anger, aggression, rejection, abandonment, fear and guilt arising out of their adoption story complicate the adopted teenager's construction of their identity as an emerging adult and complicate their relationship with their adoptive family. Again, what I particularly liked about this book is the 'hands on' advice to parents about what they can do to help their child through this minefield.

I have a vivid memory of parents who'd attended our Parents Need Space groups saying to us 'You've told us why, now tell us how!'. There aren't many books which do this but here are two excellent resources – you can order them from your local library or even invest in your own copy at £12.95 each from BAAF.

Jenny Jackson

Adoptive parenting tips

– reviewed by Allison Lindley

At times do you feel frustrated, confused or 'stuck' about your child's presenting behaviour and emotional needs? If so you may find 'Nurturing Attachments' by Kim S. Goulding a useful tool for reflecting on your child's attachment needs.

The first part of the book focuses on attachment theory and the impact of parenting children who have difficulties with attachments.

The second section introduces the 'house model of parenting'. This model draws on the work of clinicians, including Dan Hughes with his parenting advice, PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy). The house model focuses on how to help children build trust, security and develop satisfying relationships. It acknowledges that in order to achieve this, adopted children need to experience a different style of parenting to help them recover from their early years experiences.

The model begins with a ground floor of providing a secure base and then moving upwards floor by floor to consider the following: attunement, family atmosphere, belonging, looking after yourself, building relationships, PACE and managing behaviours and ending with how to support your child to manage their feelings and develop their thought processing/ thinking skills. These issues are considered chapter by chapter and thus the book allows you to either read it as a whole or dip in and out of specific practical issues that are of interest to you.

The book is interspersed with some case examples to illustrate particular experiences.

The book isn't a 'quick fix' for your child's behaviour, but may be a helpful tool to reflect on your child's emotional needs and support the parenting of children who find making attachments difficult.

Goulding, Kim. S, (2008) *Nurturing Attachments Supporting Children Who Are Fostered Or Adopted*, London Jessica Kingsley Publishers.



What does being adopted mean to me?

I was adopted in the 1970's at 6 weeks old. I was handed over by my birth mum to my adoptive parents. No photographs exist of me up until this point, and for the first 6 weeks of my life I had another name.

It's only in the last 5 years that I really understood what being adopted means to me and how it has shaped me as an adult. I never thought I was very bothered about it, it was something that happened, so no point wondering about what could have been. However, I would think about my birth mum, and at key points in my life the intensity of the feelings would become a lot stronger. I'd wonder if she remembered me, did she think about me, was she trying to find me, what did she look like, was I like her? I would wonder if I'd ever accidentally met her.

Birthdays are my worst time, although I am a lot better about them now - but why on earth would I want to celebrate the day I was born and given away? It became a standing family joke that I would hide behind the sofa with a good book half way through my parties, but it wasn't funny, inside I was very sad, but it seemed wrong to feel sad when you've got a pile of presents and candles on your cake and happy smiling family willing you on. No one ever asked me how I was feeling.

Sadly I will never get the chance to meet my birth mum. I'll never get the chance to ask my questions. She died 8 years ago, several years before I began my search, so I've lost her again, but at least this time I know where she is and I don't have to keep looking.

Tammy

Do you know about NOFAS-UK?



NOFAS-UK stands for the National Organisation on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome – UK (It uses the international, medical spelling

'Fetal', instead of the British spelling 'foetal', to access studies and international resources). NOFAS is an organisation based in London which is committed to helping individuals with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), their families and carers, and promotes public awareness about the risks of alcohol consumption during pregnancy (with the goal of reducing the number of babies being born with FASD.) NOFAS-UK also works with other charities that support children with FASD.

Services offered:

- Website (<http://www.nofas-uk.org>) contains a wealth of information about FASD.

- Helpline – 08700 333 700 five days a week Mon to Fri 10am-6pm to give advice, support and information to all callers concerned about Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.
- Training courses including a free online course <http://www.nofas-uk.org/OnlineCourse/foetalalcohol.com.htm>
- DVD, "A Child for Life" includes interviews with experts, families and children affected by FASD.
- Family Support Newsletter
- Support group meetings for individuals affected by Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, their families, carers and health professionals. The nearest support group is in Sheffield. Contact Judith Samways on judith.samways@cafamily.org.uk
- Details of the support network for birth mothers (European Birth Mother Support Network) can be found at <http://www.eurobmsn.org>.



Adoption Research

You may have seen that adoption is back on the government agenda at the moment. The Adoption Research Initiative is a Government project aimed at professionals and looking at planning, matching and support for adoptive placements. The government are using findings from research to shape policy and practice.

The initiative's aims are to help evaluate the Adoption and Children Act 2002 to improve planning and increase the number of children adopted, reduce delay and improve adoption support services.

In one of the studies, birth parents share their experiences. We thought some extracts may give some insights into their feelings.

"There were so many people involved, but there was no-one there for me".

"You've got to be careful who you mention it to, because adoption is like a label on your back which follows you everywhere".

"I was transferred to a counsellor by social services. We just sat down and talked and she asked me how I felt. I had somebody to listen to my problems".

"How do you say goodbye to your child? Emotionally you don't say goodbye".

"It's an intimate moment that stays with you for ever and you've got people watching you".

"I think the hardest part was putting my daughter in the car and saying goodbye to her. That was the last time I saw her face".

"What makes me hurt is when I see other parents with their children in the park and I can't do that".

'Particular times are hard like my birthday, Mothers day, Christmas day and my daughter's birthday, you never forget. I have letter contact once a year and I'm not allowed to put Mummy. It is very difficult to write a letter to someone that you don't know any more".

Whatever our involvement in adoption, these heartfelt comments are powerful and can touch our emotions quickly.

For further information see www.adoptionresearchinitiative.org.uk

Sally Johnson

Foundlings

Amongst the adoption stories in the media recently was 'The Gatwick baby' – the story of a baby found at Gatwick airport who later tried to research his origins. Some information from DNA tests gave Steven (his adopted name) an idea of his racial origins, and he met individuals involved in his early life. Some gaps were thus filled and gave him more sense of identity.

Similarly Mary Gauthier was abandoned in New Orleans as a baby. She ran away from her adopted parents as a teenager, and battled with drink and drugs before becoming a folk/country singer-songwriter. Her album 'The Foundling' deals with the pain of being abandoned, her struggle to find her identity, and her search for her birth mother. This verse talks of her one phone call with her birth mother, in which her mother explained that she was not willing to have contact with Mary.

*"You say that you love me
But I'm a secret you can't tell
And the hole you hide is wider
Than the waiting gates of hell
You wish you'd done it different
then But you did not know how
And its too late to change any of it
now"*

Mary talks freely of her life in interviews with the press and is clear that expressing her feelings through her music has helped her deal with her distress.

Kate Adie, herself adopted, has written a history of abandoned children: 'Nobody's Child'. An online review by an adopted adult comments:

For anyone who has been adopted, there will be many snippets that you will be able to relate to..... To know that you aren't alone in how you think or react is a crucial step in coming to terms with your past.'

London's Foundling museum is one of the foundling hospitals Adie writes about. It still has connections with Looked After and adopted children, hosting for example an annual exhibition of their art, Flourish (see www.flourish-art.org)

NORCAP hope to establish a foundlings group again and are working on ways of making a safe route for birth mothers to come forward.

They already hold a register for foundlings, their finders and birth relatives to provide as much information as possible:

ring
01865
875000.



“Children in Care Face Adoption Apartheid”

SAA's Carol Walker gives her personal thoughts on this TIMES article (19.04.11).

This emotively titled article asserts that black children languish in the care system as “social workers have become so fixated with race and finding the perfect ethnic match.” What is the evidence for this?

The article's recent figures speak for themselves: “white children in care are three times more likely to be adopted than black youngsters” and “black children under the age of 5 have to wait for an average of 1,300 days before the adoption is complete, compared with 955 days for white or Asian children.” Throughout the process there is delay for black, particularly mixed race, children.

The article feels these “appalling” delays are due to a fixation with finding the perfect ethnic match. I, however, disagree: it is important to get the right family. In my view, despite recent legislation and practice guidance within social care, there can be misunderstanding and over-simplification of the needs of black and other ethnic minority children. Good practice (Children Act 1989) requires appropriate and holistic assessment of children including their racial and cultural needs. But adoption involves dealing with major losses and for a child to be placed transracially is likely to mean the child facing further losses and challenges. This does not necessarily mean that white families cannot care for non white children: it has to be the appropriate white family with the willingness and skills to acknowledge the child's identity needs and their own lack of awareness.

Workers, black and white, may lack the experience and skills to assess and analyse the dynamics and issues within black family systems. This leads to indecisiveness and drift. As Ms George, a black adopter says: “there is a little bit of fear about whether they are going to find the right adoptive family if the child is black; so they delay the decision in the first place.” The recruitment, approval and support of black adopters and carers require a commitment in terms of effort, time and resources, difficult in the current climate. I am sure this debate will continue.

We would love to hear your comments, views and experiences in relation to these issues.



Shadings Community Project

Due to the recent government attention and increased media coverage of trans-racial placements concerning adoptive parents and foster carers, I would like to take this opportunity to talk about the ‘Shadings’ Community Project based in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire.

Shadings is a project that offers a wide range of support to promote the well being of African/African-Caribbean and Multiple Heritage children and young people.

Shadings was established in 2006 and meets on the first Tuesday of each month at the Mansfield Christian Community Centre, The Church of God of Prophecy
1 Woodhouse Road
Mansfield
Nottinghamshire
NG18 2AD

The project is open to anyone who is:-

- African/African-Caribbean or of multi heritage descent or

- A parent/carer or family member of a child and young person who is of an African/African – Caribbean or multi-heritage descent.

The service is available to those who live in Mansfield and the surrounding areas.

I was fortunate to attend the Shadings Project conference held in March this year, which focussed on the social and educational development and needs of dual heritage children. I found the event informative and inspiring.

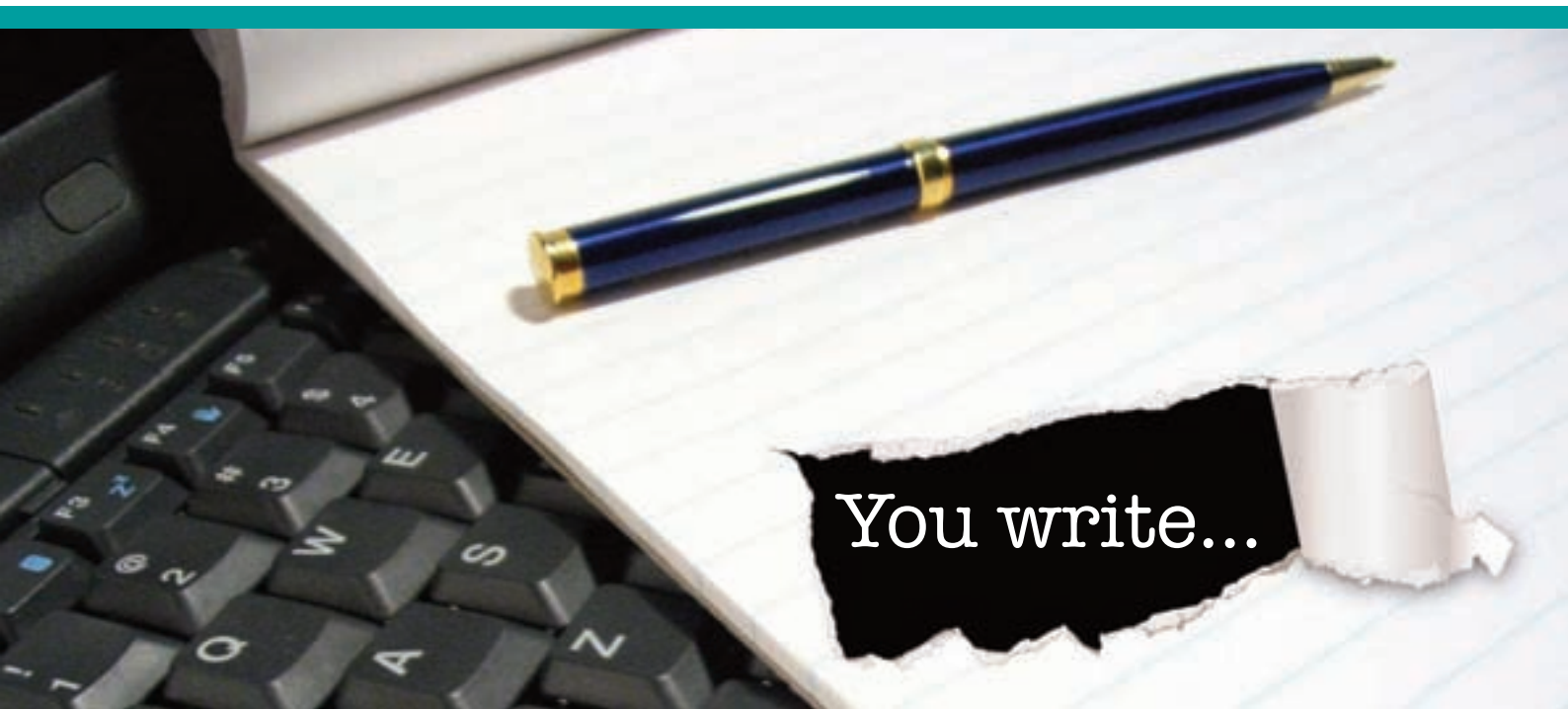
If you would like to know more about ‘SHADINGS’ you can contact Irma or Lesley on 01623 634722 or Email: shadingsproject@hotmail.co.uk

For other projects linked to supporting dual heritage children and families contact:-

Mix-d (Multiple Heritage Project) Tel – 0161 868 0034 or Email: bradleymix-d.org

People in Harmony
Tel – 0845 468 0755 or
Email: info@pih.org.uk

Conrad Richardson



Adoptive parenting

– an extract from an article by Jill, an adoptive parent

Sometimes there can be a perception that adoptive families managing, or struggling with, challenging behaviour may be failing in some way. As an adopter, I've always felt that acting out, or working through issues, in behaviour is a healthy response to earlier trauma. If behaviour is a way "to attempt to solve a problem" for

the young people, it is behaviour, amongst other things, that gives us clues to help them. Some adults may be more able than others to help make sense of this and some may need more help. It will always be a challenge, but we can all learn so much about others and ourselves from the most vulnerable. Once we

grasp the extent of their vulnerability, we can also see and respect their enormous strengths. Over time our young people have the capacity to lead very positive lives - as long as they have been helped to make sense of their stories, their own responses and others responses to them.

AdoptPRIDE

Adoptive Parent's Resources, Information, Development & Education

Adoption learning in Nottinghamshire has been through a difficult time recently with major cuts being implemented across the council. Planning and course delivery has been on hold but I am very pleased to say we are once again planning learning and development opportunities.

Changing Families, Changing Roles has become a well established course, and is planned to run again on 24th September, this time in Ollerton. This course aims to help your family members and friends understand more about modern adoption. The leaflet and application form is being circulated, so please talk to your family and friends about this course.

We are delighted to resume our partnership with Family Learning and our next residential weekend for adoptive families with children over 10 is a **Family Team Development Activity Weekend** Friday Evening 22nd July to Sunday 24th July 2011.

Look out for other learning events in the autumn - we will be emailing as much as possible to save money and hopefully to reach you more swiftly.

Do email me with your training needs and feedback at adoption.learning@nottsc.gov.uk

Some of you will know that we have been looking at a range of projects to offer resources, information and learning. One of these options is via the

internet and we have been working hard to develop the **AdoptPRIDE secure website (Virtual Learning Platform) for adoptive families**. We are busy editing video of the most recent conferences and will be uploading other materials for you. We will send you your user ID and password in the near future.

Finally, if your child is in school you may know that each school has a designated teacher for Looked After and Adopted Children. At least until the end of 2011, these teachers have access to a website – AKAMAS - which has courses and materials related to **attachment and education** on it. If you would like to be given access to these, please talk to the designated teacher at your child's school.



Rachael Ellis

Hellos and Goodbyes

Departures and arrivals at Support After Adoption

Some of you will know **Chris Jones**, who was a social worker in Mansfield Children's social work team before working for Support After Adoption on a part time basis for the last 7 years. Chris has now retired and we'd like to take the opportunity to thank her for her work in the team- especially with adopted adults and birth relatives. I know she really enjoyed working in this area of adoption support and we will miss her considerable experience and skills!

Similarly **Linda Plummer** worked as a sessional worker here over the last 3 years, again with adults affected by adoption. She too retired at the end of March. Her professionalism was much appreciated by service users- thank you Linda!

Many thanks and all the best to **Meg Staples** and **Catherine Holliday** too as they leave the adoption service. Both have brought so much to the adoption service over many years and will be much missed.

Last but by no means least, **Jean Gilson**, our psychotherapist retired in March after 12 years. Jean's wisdom and therapeutic insights have done much to shape the team's services. Her service users have benefited from her caring, sensitive and down-to-earth approach- as well as from her great sense of humour! We held a retirement lunch for Jean where friends and colleagues from all her working life gathered to celebrate her achievements over 50 years of working life and wish Jean all the very best for the future. Some tributes to Jean are included here and she writes about her retirement opposite.

Bev Goodwin will be the new worker filling Jean's post. Welcome to Bev...and see her photo and introduction in this newsletter!

'She's got a wicked sense of humour!'

A letter from the other side!



Hi! No, I am not back, but could not resist the invitation to have a last few words. What a retirement send off I was given with amazing presents, cards, songs and poems with lovely words of good wishes and the humour- fantastic! I really do miss everyone- parents, children, adults, colleagues, the daily work challenge and the developing work. I am trying not to let my brain go mushy and the rest of me come to that!

Retirement started with the most amazing holiday in Singapore, Australia and New Zealand. I keep looking at the photos and can't believe I was there: it was out of this world and a good way to start. This has been followed by a day at the farm park in Kent with my grand children. Just being with them is fun. What energy!- theirs not mine.

Today I was planting out vegetables in my garden, I sat for a moment while I was watching the tits going in and out of the nesting box which was erected a while ago but this is the first time it has been used. It made me think back to the time when I was raising my adopted boys; how you set things up for them, both practical and emotional, and you see no signs of use, then, suddenly, you notice that they have taken hold of the very thing you thought they had completely ignored.

Looking back, looking forward, I can't say that retirement is the greatest yet as it is early days, but I am working on it. I will continue to think of you all as you all live with and work to make adoption the best for everyone involved, building the nest and beyond.

JEAN (retired SAA psychotherapist and non-retired adoptive parent!)

'Jean made therapy accessible'

'Jean's emotional intelligence has been a gift to us all.'

'Jean's walked the walk as an adopter and gave understanding and challenges'

Jean's got a big warm heart'



Hi, my name is Bev Goodwin, and I am very excited to be joining the Support After Adoption Team at Chadburn House this summer. I am a mum of 2 who lives in Nottingham. I have been a child care social worker for 17 years; starting out in busy child protection teams in Leicestershire, and working for the past 11 years as a Permanence social worker in Derby. Over those years I have had the pleasure of planning many adoptive placements for the children I have worked with, and playing a part in those families coming together. I have also been a member of the Adoption Panel in Derby. I am a big supporter of adoption; which I know has its own unique challenges, trials and tribulations along the way, but plenty of its own unique joys too! I am very much looking forward to joining the team that is there to support you through your adoption journey.

Bev

Fond farewell

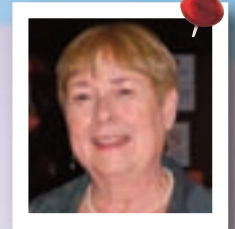
I have been the specialist Adoption Welfare Rights officer with the adoption team since September 2004, the first in the country and still only one of a handful. But alas I will be bidding a fond farewell to the adoption service on 9th September to embrace pastures new. I am in fact setting up my own business and supporting my partner in his, so still busy.

I have met so many great, wise and stalwart people since I have worked within the service and learnt so much. I have always been welcomed and supported and I will surely miss many different people.

A new officer will soon be appointed and I hope they will enjoy the post's challenges and successes as much as I have done.

Catherine Holliday

Letter from Meg Staples



I am very pleased to have this opportunity to write to you after so many years of working with you all. I started work in adoption in the 1980s, placing children for adoption and working with birth parents and adopted adults, but my social work background had been in hospital social work and adult mental health, and that mix of experience has served me well over the years.

When we were working all those years ago, adoption was moving from baby placements to the placement of older children, many with additional needs and requiring the benefits that a stable safe family for life can bring. As research has grown, so we know that our early belief that adoption offered good outcomes for many children was right, though the amount of support families needed on a lifelong basis was not as clear as it is now.

Adoption is a complex matter; to move a child from one family to live with another and expect all to be well without additional input would be naïve. It is a journey with difficult times, as well as joyous times, and it is definitely not for the fainthearted! Most adoptive families do an amazing task of

re-parenting hurt children, and over 30 years, I have witnessed many children grow up happily. Many are now parents themselves, and able to care for their children because of the love and commitment shown by their adoptive parents. What positives you pour into your children is never wasted, even though it may seem so at times!

It was a privilege to help to build the Adoption Service that you know today. Having been involved in the County Adoption Team for many years, it has been wonderful to see their work joining with Support after Adoption, so that families needing on-going support can experience a more "seamless" service. As Service Manager at the end of my career, I witnessed the excellent support offered to birth parents and adopted adults. I believe that Nottinghamshire has one of the best adoption services in the country, and am pleased to have been able to influence some of the key developments.

I can't think of a more rewarding career than mine has been in adoption, and I will miss my contact with many wonderful children and families, as well as some wonderful colleagues. Thank you too, to those families who contributed to my memory book which I will treasure always.

I send you all my warmest best wishes for the future.
Meg

**Contact
the Support
After
Adoption
helpline on**

01623 437988

**Monday: 9:30am to 1:00pm
Tuesday: 4:00pm to 7:30pm
Thursday: 1:00pm to 4:00pm**

**Out of hours
advice service**

**The Fostering and Adoption
Advice Line** offers specialist
parenting advice out of hours.
The line is open: **Monday to
Friday: between 6:00pm
and 10:00pm. Weekends and
bank holidays: between
10:00am and 10:00pm** and
can be contacted on
0800 085 8995

The Emergency Duty Team
operates when locality offices
are closed and is open:
**Monday to Friday: between
5:00pm and 8:30am.
Weekends between 4:30pm
on Friday to 8:30am on
Monday** and can be
contacted on
0300 456 4546



Achievements and celebrations!

Our young people's newsletter gives accounts of wonderful achievements by adopted young people, including 17 year old Michael's international tennis playing. This achievement, and many more, can be celebrated at the annual Achievement awards day at Rufford Park on September 24th. If you would like to nominate your child, please contact us at support.afteradoption@nottsc.gov.uk for an application form. Even if your child is unable to attend, the nomination will result in a certificate to mark their particular achievement. This is not just about SATs and GCSE results but should be for anything that you recognise as an achievement for that young person.



New Family Social - support for gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and trans-gender adopters

NFS is the UK charity for LGBT adopters, foster carers and their children. Amongst many other activities they have a network of local groups across the UK.

We have an agreement with them and you can join for £10 if you have adopted Notts children.

One adopter gave feedback from attending an event:

"We just wanted to thank everyone for today. It was such a vibrant and positive event and it was so great to meet and chat to such an enthusiastic and inspiring group of people."

See www.newfamilysocial.co.uk for details of planned events and resources.



Nottinghamshire
County Council

Contacting us

email
phone
post

support.afteradoption@nottsc.gov.uk

01623 437223

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