

Good news from the Government!

The Fostering Network is delighted to announce that the Government has reconsidered proposals that would have penalised foster carers if they claim housing benefit in privately rented and social housing property from April 2013.

Under the new proposals, foster carers **will** be allowed an additional room, whether or not a child has been placed with them or they are between placements, **so long as they have fostered a child or become an approved foster carer within the last 12 months.** You can find out more by visiting www.fostering.net.

The Fostering Network would like to extend a big thank you to all members who supporting the campaign and helping to achieve such a fantastic result.

the fostering network
the voice of foster care



Get in the Frame!

The theme for Foster Care Fortnight (13th – 26th May) this year is 'Get in the Frame!' and the Fostering Network is keen to get photographs of as many fostering teams and foster carers in the frame as possible to help raise the awareness of the need for more foster carers. Here are some of our team 'in the frame'! You can visit the website that the Fostering Network has put together at www.pinterest.com/fosteringnet/get-in-the-frame-fcf-2013.



Could you look after Tamsin?

Children and young people need you - make a difference and become a foster carer.

Allech chi edrych ar ôl Tamsin?

Mae'n angen chi ar blant a phobl ifanc - gwneuch wahaniaeth a deuch yn ofal ydd maeth.

0800 587 5664
www.caerphilly.gov.uk/fostering
Text 'Foster' to 78866

Could you look after Kyle?

Children and young people need you - make a difference and become a foster carer.

Allech chi edrych ar ôl Kyle?

Mae'n angen chi ar blant a phobl ifanc - gwneuch wahaniaeth a deuch yn ofal ydd maeth.

0800 587 5664
www.caerphilly.gov.uk/fostering
Text 'Foster' to 78866

Could you look after Sophie & Jordan together?

Some brothers and sisters need to stay together. Can you make a difference and foster more than one child?

Allech chi edrych ar ôl Sophie a Jordan gyda'i gilydd?

Mae'n angen i rai brodyr a chwiorydd aros gyda'i gilydd. Allech chi wneud wahaniaeth a maethu mwy na un plentyn?

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A 'brand new' brand!

After consultation with the recruitment and retention working group we have now approved and agreed the new brand for Caerphilly's fostering team. We would like to introduce you to Tamsin, Kyle and Sophie & Jordan. We hope that our new 'family' will be attracting a number of enquiries from lots of new prospective foster carers!

Pastures New!

As many of you will know by now, Jane Moore left Caerphilly County Borough Council at the end of March. We asked Jane for some comments before she left and this is what she wanted to say to you all:



'I joined Caerphilly in June 2002 and have always had responsibility for fostering services. When I look back over the last 11 years, I am enormously gratified at the improvements we have achieved together. Right from the beginning I believed very strongly that if we were to bring about the improvements to our fostering services that children and carers deserved, we could only do it by working very closely with foster carers. For those of you who were around in 2002 you will remember how poor some things were and I am enormously grateful to those of you who in those early days got stuck in and helped bring about some of those early changes. There is still a huge task ahead; but I am confident that progress will continue to be made with Cath Williams and Rhiannon Bates as Team Managers and an excellent staff group I know I am leaving you in safe hands. I have worked in Local Authority Children's Services Departments for 40 years, and I thought it was about time I did something different! I am currently working on a project for Directors on the opportunities for collaborative working in Fostering Services across South Wales and in the course of this work I will have contact with Cath and Rhiannon so I will still take a very active and fond interest in how you are all doing! I have enormous respect for the work each one of you does day in and day out and the differences you make to children's lives - it's work I could never do myself. It has been my real pleasure to have met and worked with so many of you over the last 11 years and I can honestly say that I have thoroughly enjoyed working in Caerphilly.'

Anything you want to share.....?

Please don't forget, this newsletter is for all foster carers to share knowledge and ideas with each other. Anything you come across that helps you can be shared with all carers through the newsletter. Please email Ceri Martin at martic2@caerphilly.gov.uk anything you would like to include in the next newsletter!



URGENT INFORMATION FOR ALL FOSTER CARERS.

Foster Care Equipment

As you will no doubt be aware when the Welsh Government introduced the national minimum foster allowances, they made it clear to Local Authorities that all the equipment should be purchased from the new allowances.

We acknowledge that when carers are first approved there **can** be significant initial expenditure and in recognition of this, newly approved foster carers **will** be supplied with the equipment that they individually need. It is expected that any **replacement** equipment will be purchased from the weekly allowance.

Carers also advised us that the equipment provided was of poor quality and longevity, we realised that we were spreading quite a small budget too thinly. The list of equipment has now been revised, and by removing small items; the money can be spent buying better quality furniture.

Please could you keep all the receipts for the equipment, as generally equipment comes with a 12-month manufacturers warrantee, and in some instances, with the original receipt we might be able to put in a claim under this warrantee.

There may be 'exceptional circumstances' when a carer may need to replace an item of equipment. If you feel that you need to replace equipment under 'exceptional circumstances' please discuss with your link worker, and if a claim is thought to be appropriate, the Team Manager will considerate it.

Payslips made easy

A few foster carers have recently been asking for an explanation about the codes on their payslips. Hopefully this will help:

Maintenance: namemain18020303

The first 4 letters of the child's name followed by 'main' is the **allowance** 1802 is the start date of payment and 0303 is the end date of payment (18/02/13 - 03/03/13)

Fee: namefee118020303

Again the first 4 letters of the child's name are used, but this time followed by Fee1 (or Fee2 or Fee3). This is your **fee** as a foster carer. The number refers to the carers' skill level (1 Probationary, 2 Mainstream and 3 Career), 1802 again is the start date of payment and 0303 is the end date of payment (18/02/13 - 03/03/13)

Travel: nametrav18020303

Again we use the first 4 letters of the child's name followed by the **payment period** for the travel and not the dates the travel was made.

A12/200

this is normally travel or unusual expenses that is not able to be processed through our payment system so have been entered manually

FG012345AA

These are payments that have missed our payment run, therefore have to be paid manually, the AA part of the reference would be the child's initials

If you have any queries, please contact either Mark Richards or Gillian Matthews on 01443 864538 / 01443 864531 or email: ssfinancechildren@caerphilly.gov.uk

Sometimes the finance team do not receive information in time to update our payment system regarding movements of children and sometimes this can affect your pay. **It would be a great help if the carers could email Finance only giving the child's initials or telephone to notify us of the change, hopefully this will help us to make sure that most payments are correct and that we don't have to make a recovery for overpayment of maintenance and fee in fewer cases.**

If you need us..... Contact telephone numbers

Mon – Thurs 8.30am – 5pm and Friday 8.30am – 4.30pm Contact your own link worker. If your link worker is not available, there will be a duty worker available to help you during these hours.

Every evening 6 – 10pm please ring out of hours on 01495 233251

EDT available when the office is closed 0800 328 4432

We should all listen to Billy!!!!

The resource library has been well used recently, and one foster carer borrowed the 'Billy Says.....' collection of books.

'I was having some difficulties explaining what foster care was to the little boy I was looking after I had a chat with my link worker. She recommended that I had a look on the foster carers website at the list of resources in the Library. I came across some books called 'Billy Says'. The books are based on a little girl called Kirsty and her doll called Billy. Kirsty is a little girl who is removed from her parents and is placed with foster carers, and the focus of the books is on Billy.



The books cover a range of topics from Kirsty's life at home, Kirsty going into foster care, her struggling to manage the difference between home life and life with a carer and the length of time making decisions can take, life story work and moving to a forever home

These books really helped the little boy who instantly recognised that he was like Kirsty. He was willing to listen to what Billy said but not to me or other professionals.

These books are available from the resource library at Foxes Lane and I would recommend them to anyone who may be having some communication issues with any child in their care.'

Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent integration update

Caerphilly County Borough Council's Cabinet discussed the future of an integration programme involving social services provision across Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent at a meeting on 9th April.

The recommendation not to proceed to full integration was made and accepted, due to the high risk of financial cross subsidisation in a fully integrated model of working.

Nigel Barnett, Acting Chief Executive of Caerphilly County Borough Council said, "This recommendation to members was certainly not one that was made lightly, however we simply must acknowledge that, given the current and forthcoming pressures on public sector finances, we must do what is right by the citizens of our county borough. I firmly believe that at this point in time, in order for us to prioritise funding for essential frontline services including social services provision, we must be in a relatively strong financial position, and not one whereby we are at risk of cross subsidisation".

A full copy of the report that was presented to Caerphilly County Borough Council's Cabinet on 9th April can be found at www.caerphilly.gov.uk



Foster Carers Website

Just a little reminder about the foster carers website. All information relevant to foster carers can be found on your very own part of the web. You can access it by visiting www.caerphilly.gov.uk/fostering.

If you would like anything added, please click on the 'email us' link on the site!



Foster Carer Forum

The number of carers now using the forum has grown to 26, and we are still looking for more! So come on, log onto Facebook and search for Foster Philly and put in a friend request. We will do the rest!

Carers are using the forum generally to ask for advice from their peers and to share good practise, so what have you got to lose!



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

More good news from Welsh Government!

Delegated Authority for Foster Carers

The fact that foster children can sometimes miss out on simple things such as school trip or sleepovers has been a bit of a bugbear for us all.

A 'good practise guidance' has now been produced by Welsh Government to ensure that children and young people in care are able to enjoy the same opportunities as their peers and that foster carers are given enough authority to make everyday decisions about the children in their care.

Some decisions will need to remain the responsibility of the child's social worker such as signing for passports and arrangements for contact, but many day to day decisions such as overnight stays, school trips and haircuts can now be delegated to foster carers through the care planning process and the completion of a consent form signed by the child's parent/social worker. If you would like more information on delegated authority, please contact your link worker, or visit www.wales.gov.uk and search for 'delegated authority for foster carers'.

