



Welcome!

Hello and welcome to the Spring newsletter! It has certainly been a month of April showers, and here at TFA we are hoping the sunny season will be as long as the rainy season has been! Not least because we have the summer event booked for 10th August at a venue with ample outdoor space, so please do save the date. Further details and how to book will be released nearer the time by mailshot.

This newsletter features a spotlight on the TFA duty service, some new developments in relation to the TFA website development, it highlights useful CATCH webinars which might interest you, and offers some advice about upcoming Mental Health Awareness week.

Many have you have been asking for peer support for some time, so you will be excited to hear that we are working in partnership with Adoption UK (AUK) to recruit and train a number of TFA parents to become part of a peer mentoring team of volunteers! You would benefit from specialised training and support, using your lived experiences to support other families facing similar challenges. Peer mentor spaces are limited, so if this interests you, please do look out for those mailshots for more detail in the coming weeks.

This April we launched our Junior Adoption Group (JAG), which is synonymous with our established Teenage Adoption Group (TAG). TFA's Laura Martin who leads the group has written a short piece below highlighting the benefits of the group. Please consider this for your primary school aged child/ren and contact the team for more information if you think you and your child/ren would benefit from attending.

Thank you for taking the time to fill in our feedback forms in relation to TFA social events earlier this year. Your views have been heard and shared in previous mailshots, and we have now set a date for our Winter event for Saturday 25th January 2025. We will repeat save the dates in future newsletters, but for those of you who like early notice for your calendars,

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we have booked early to secure the date. You will note the date means a move away from the Christmas theme, Father Christmas will be on his rest period in January and therefore unavailable for appearance at our event. We will arrange alternative entertainment and release details, with supporting photos for your children, nearer the time. We hope the photos in advance will help you to manage their expectations on the day.

We regularly look for useful content for the newsletter to share with you, if you come across anything you think might be useful for other families, please do get in touch via PASAdmin@wigan.gov.uk.

Thank you,

Lisa Dempsey
Adoption Support Principal Manager



Parent Opportunity & TFA Development

TFA continue to work on the developments you suggested in Adopter Voice forums and service feedback requests. We are very happy to share that the service is currently reviewing the TFA website and content, and media and marketing colleagues are working with us to build a new and improved area on the WWW that will offer an accurate representation of us as a service. We wholly agree that the website should be more than an advertising vehicle for new prospective adopters. With this in mind, we need your help! We are actively seeking stories/testimonials from children and families that we can feature on the website. We have already consulted with our Teenage Adoption Group (TAG) to ask their views on how they experience this group, and they have shared some very powerful words with us that reflect how they feel about their experiences in the group. Some of the parents in the parent room have also shared their thoughts on how they value and experience peer support in the parent room, from which we plan to create an article to feature on the website. We hope that this will encourage future families to access TAG and other elements of the core offer.

We would like to know if you would like to share your story/experience of how an element of the service has had an impact on you as a parent, as a family, or specifically on your child/ren. Feel free to be creative!

If you would like to write a piece for the website please share your submission via PASAdmin@wigan.gov.uk, along with your name and telephone number. If you would like to go a step further and be considered for a podcast/recording or an interview whereby the interviewer writes the summary, please do get in touch. We would welcome photos, video clips or anything you feel could be helpful to other children/young people and families who look to the website for information and support. Please bear in mind the website is open to all, and you are in control of the extent of your anonymity.

If you have any ideas for content, please do add those to the email. Following a launch, we will continue to monitor, review and update content, so there will always be opportunity to hear your ideas, whenever they might come to you!

CATCH – formally The Adopter Hub



Upcoming webinar: The in-utero experience and its impact on a child

Thursday 16 May 12:30pm - 1:30pm

In this webinar, Dr Eleanor McCartney, Medical Advisor for PACT, IAC, Diagrama and Together Trust, will cover a child's in-utero experiences and how this impacts upon a child's later presentation. She will discuss the potential impacts of exposure to domestic violence, neglect, poor maternal nutrition, maternal ill health, drugs and alcohol.

Recent Webinars on CATCH:

Webinar: Nurturing connection and healing through Trust-Based Relational Intervention®(TBRI®)

In this webinar Jessica Spenceley, founder of Nurtured Belonging, gives an introduction to the attachment-based, trauma-informed intervention Trust-Based Relational Intervention® (TBRI®). She provides tools and insights to help parents build strong connections with and support their child's healing from early adversity and trauma (30mins).

Webinar: Occupational therapy case studies – Supporting children struggling to access learning at primary school (Daisy and Ibrahim)

Daisy (aged 5) stopped attending school due to her complex needs and anxiety. She is able to understand instructions and communicate her needs but finds it very difficult if activities do not happen in the way that she would like them to or that she anticipates. Ibrahim (aged 6) has a diagnosis of autism and his difficulties with attention and concentration were making it difficult for him to access learning at school.

In this webinar Dr Naomi Graham (Occupational Therapist) discusses working with the children, parents and schools to help Daisy and Ibrahim access learning more easily (50mins).

This webinar will be helpful for anyone supporting a child struggling with school.

Webinar: Understanding the impact of neglect

Neglect is the biggest reason children are subject to local authority intervention, the most complex to identify and developmentally harmful to the child. In this webinar Dawn Hodson, Chief Executive of Reducing the Risk, looks at neglect across various life stages, including in utero, covering the potential impact, what research tells us and some potential solutions (1 hr 5 mins).

This webinar will be helpful for all Hub members looking to understand the impact of neglect on a child.

Webinar: Occupational therapy case studies – Supporting children with autism (Cian)

Cian (aged 7) has a diagnosis of autism and ADHD. He attends a mainstream school and receives support to enable him to engage in activities. He is able to regulate his behaviour at times at school but often has meltdowns at home. Cian has some challenges with his dressing skills and eating a range of foods.

In this webinar Occupational Therapist Dr Naomi Graham discusses Cian's needs, some of the potential reasons behind them and strategies they put in place at home and at school (55mins).

This webinar may be of interest to anyone supporting a child with autism.

CATCH continues to offer a forum that provides a safe space to share tips with other adopters and an adopter's webchat service with trained peer support volunteers.

For more information about CATCH (The Adopter Hub), please contact your allocated worker or email PAsupport@wigan.gov.uk.

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ADOPTER VOICE



YOUR ADOPTER VOICE IS NEEDED!

What is Adopter Voice? Adopter Voice is an impartial service, used to share your lived experience, to ensure your family is at the heart of influencing and involvement to direct the future planning of adoption support. By bringing the experiences of adopters together we can form a stronger alliance that is able to inform decision and policy makers, creating a better life for adopted children and their families.

Adopter Voice now have a closed Facebook group for TFA Peer support:

[Adopter Voice Together for Adoption | Facebook](#)



If you would know more about Adopter Voice or, you would like to get involved in future events, please contact - AdopterVoice@adoptionuk.org.uk

Together for Adoption - SOCIAL MEDIA

Have you seen us on social media?

Together for Adoption's focus is finding adoptive families for our children, but we are asking for your help in raising our profile via social media to help us reach more adoptive families.

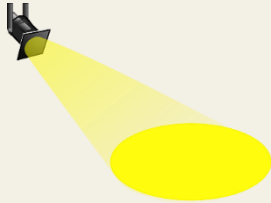
If anyone is on Facebook or X, could we please ask that you like and share our page and if you are willing to do so, could you please share it with your "community" on Facebook and ask them to also like and share.

Facebook - https://www.facebook.com/TFAdoption_UK

X - https://twitter.com/TFAdoption_UK

SPOTLIGHT ON:

Adoption Support Duty Service



For this edition of our newsletter, we wanted to highlight our Adoption Support Duty Service, which is the foundation and the 'front door' of our core offer service. We refer to duty as our Tier One service. Our duty service runs Monday- Friday 9am-4pm and offers advice, guidance and signposting. Our duty workers deal with a wide variety of enquiries from both families and professionals.

The enquiries from duty help to inform our service and many of our new services are developed in response to these enquiries. The duty worker may provide information about our Tier Two services i.e. our workshops and groups, speak to an adopted adult regarding accessing their records, or to a parent regarding an assessment of adoption support needs.

Sometimes, we may need to signpost to other services if it is not an adoption specific enquiry. This may be regarding an education or health matter and in light of this, in the next few editions of the newsletter, we are going to spotlight those areas and share resource suggestions, and we hope you will find this information useful.

If you would like to contact the duty worker, please email PA Support@wigan.gov.uk (remember to include a contact number in case we need to call you back) or telephone 01942 487272.



Mental Health Awareness Week 2024 13-19 May 2024

The theme this year is “Movement: Moving more for our mental health.”

Being active is important for our mental health. But so many of us struggle to get enough exercise. We know there are many different reasons for this, so this Mental Health Awareness Week we want to help people to find moments for movement in their daily routines. Going for a walk in your neighbourhood, putting on your favourite music and dancing around the living room, chair exercises when you’re watching television – it all counts!

For more information, have a look at the website and follow the social media:

[Mental Health Awareness Week | Mental Health Foundation](#)

- X: [@mentalhealth](#)
- Facebook: [@mentalhealthfoundation](#)
- Instagram: [@mentalhealthfoundation](#)
- LinkedIn: [@mental-health-foundation](#)

We have included some useful contacts in the Useful Links section.



Letterbox

The 3 letterbox coordinators manage over a whopping **3,000** agreements, providing services to over **1,000** children across TFA!

Please:

- Try to send your letters in the agreed month.
 - Update us if your contact details change.
 - Sign letters with your first names.
 - Include your child's birth name and placing authority in all communications with us.
 - Get in touch if you've got any questions!
- If you'd like to learn more about letterbox contact and its important role in children's identity development, why not sign up to our **Keeping Connections** workshop?

You could write about...

- Personality/appearance
- Education
- Activities
- Food
- Events
- Favourite things

Remember to...

- Use names
- Be descriptive
- Ask questions
- Be creative -
hand/footprints, drawings,
'All about Me' lists,
anonymised photos.

Please send your letters to: TfALetterbox@wigan.gov.uk

Or post to:

**Together for Adoption
Letterbox Service
Warrington Town Hall
Sankey Street
Warrington
WA1 1UH**

Please mark all correspondence for the attention of the relevant coordinator.

Cheshire West & Chester and Halton – Sue Prince: 07900980669

Warrington – Sarah Harris: 07385969752

Wigan and St Helens – Liz Sherriff: 07843218060

Junior Adoption Group (JAG)

We are delighted to share the launch of our new Junior Adoption Group, known as JAG. This group is for primary school age children, is a monthly 1.5 hour session facilitated by the TFA team. JAG has replaced our previous STARS group which used to run consecutively for 6 weeks twice a year. JAG now aligns with our teenage group – TAG, which is run with the same core group of staff.

The atmosphere of our first JAG session was nothing short of amazing. We felt we seamlessly integrated the same therapeutic activities offered at stars but created an environment where the children felt empowered to engage at their own pace. We approached our activities with a renewed focus on children having more autonomy, relaxation, and enjoyment. They enjoyed each other's company and engaged with all the activities, had the freedom to make their own choices which seemed to increase their engagement and quality of their experience.

From making glitter mind jars to kneading the kinetic sand, the children embraced each activity with enthusiasm and creativity. Having had the opportunity to access both rooms (Activity/ craft room and sports hall) throughout all our session, the children managed this well. When in the sports hall, they gravitated towards sports and physical activities, enjoying the freedom to play football, basketball, and simply run and jump to their heart's content. We all loved the parachute game though and after initially being adult led, the children then began to organise their own games too.

As the session ended, we gathered for story time, allowing the children to share their activities and recount their favourite parts with their parents. (Parents had enjoyed a hot drink and a biscuit whilst their children played). While the format has changed slightly and we no longer do 'stars', we offer positive feedback for all the children. Every child was celebrated for their unique contributions, reaffirming their brilliance.

So, our 1st JAG session was a resounding success, setting the stage for many more to come. We hope this is the beginning of a positive service development, that the monthly sessions increase accessibility for families, and that as parents you also value access to peer support in the parent room. We look forward to our future sessions and hope to see you there.

Laura Martin

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

If you are interested in any of our events / training etc or would like more details, please contact Adoption Support Duty on 01942 4872727 or pasupport@wigan.gov.uk.

Details will also be sent out prior to each date by the facilitator.

Please remember that if you book onto a workshop and you are unable to make it, can you please email us and cancel your place. This allows the place to be offered to someone else on our waiting list.

May 2024	JAG TAG Intro to Theraplay Exploring attachment, addressing trauma & change Adoption & Contact: Keeping Connections	1st May 4:15-5:45pm 1st May 6-7:30pm 21st May 6:30-8:30pm 16th & 23rd May 6:30-9pm 23rd May 7-9pm
June 2024	First Time Parenting JAG TAG Adoption & Education	4th June 9:30am – 2:30pm 5th June 4:15-5:45pm 5th June 6-7:30pm 11th June 9:30am – 1pm
July 2024	JAG TAG Intro to Theraplay Parenting Through Adolescence	3rd July 4:15-5:45pm 3rd July 6-7:30pm 16th July 6:30 – 8:30pm TBC



Virtual training/workshop/event

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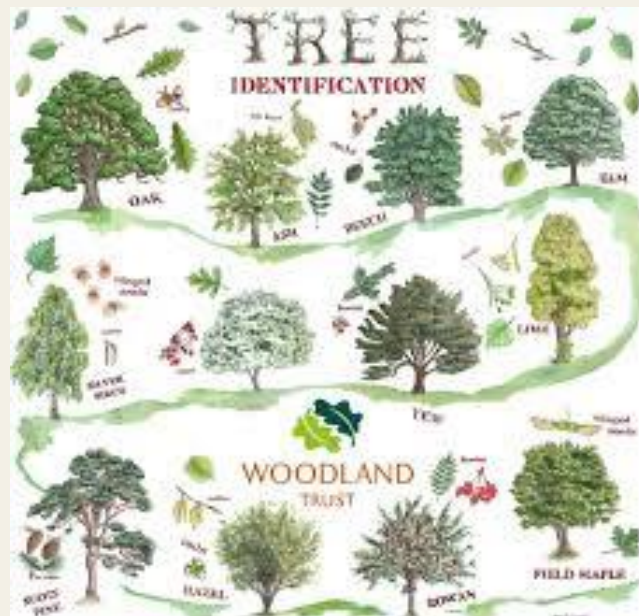


THINGS TO DO IN SPRING

MAKE A BIRD FEEDER



IDENTIFY TREES



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MAKE A FAIRY GARDEN



PAINT ROCKS



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WALK IN THE WOODS



VISIT A FARM



LGBTQ+ - groups for young people

Phoenix – Cheshire West and Chester Council

The Proud Trust run a weekly group for LBGT+ young people and those questioning their gender or sexuality aged 13-19 (and up to 25 with additional needs) who live or spend time in Ellesmere Port.

Currently meeting online, or at a venue in Ellesmere Port, Chester, Northwich or Winsford 6.00-7-30pm, first and third Tuesdays.

For more information: email youthgroups@theproudtrust.org

GLOW – Halton Council

A youth group for LGBTQ+ young people. Meeting every Tuesday @KRMZ Kingsway, Widnes

11-15 years 5-6.30pm and 16-24 years 7-9pm.

For more information: call 01928 240406 or email haltonadmin@addaction.org.uk

Over The Rainbow – St Helens Council

Over the Rainbow is part social group, part support group for young people aged 13-25 years who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans or are questioning their sexuality or gender identity. It is a closed confidential youth group run by the Health Improvement team in St Helens.

For more information: call 01744 457 243 or email shealth.improvement@sthknhs.uk

TAGS Teenagers, Gender and Sexuality – Warrington Council

TAGS is a safe place that young people aged 13-24 who identify as LGBTQ+ to meet and find peer support advice and acceptance. There are two groups based in a town centre location.

For more information contact:

TAGS 11-16yrs Jaime Graham Jaime.graham@warrington.gov.uk 07775 024897

TAGS 17-24yrs Sharon Johnson Sharon.johnson@warrington.gov.uk 07717 815859

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BYOU Project – Wigan Council

This is a local youth group run by Wigan Council. The group offers a safe space where local young people from the LGBTQ+ community can meet new friends, get support from youth workers and peers, get involved in new projects, have your say on issues that are important to you, and campaign for positive change.

The group meets once a week, usually in a central Wigan venue and there is also an option to join the meetings online.

For more information: email b.youproject@wigan.gov.uk

USEFUL LINKS

<https://adoptionengland.co.uk/> - there are lots of resources and materials to use

<https://www.kooth.com/> is an online mental wellbeing community.

<https://youngminds.org.uk/> is committed to improving children's wellbeing and mental health. Offers information, advice and support for young people affected by mental health.

www.mind.org.uk when you're experiencing a mental health problem, supportive and reliable information can change your life. Mind empower people to understand their mental health and the choices available to them.

<https://www.internetmatters.org> – information and support about keeping children and young people safe online.

<http://www.lifestoryworks.org> this site is aimed at adopters to help them talk about difficult stories and may be helpful for parents whose children have been affected by disruption or trauma.

www.mindful.org – mindfulness for kids – when we teach mindfulness to children, we equip them with tools to build self-esteem, manage stress,

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and skilfully approach challenges. Explore this site to learn how to introduce mindfulness and meditation to you children at any age.

Positive Parenting Solutions is a Facebook page offering lots of interesting articles on parenting toddlers to teens.

Trauma Informed Parent is a Facebook page offering information, resources and perspective for parents and caregivers of children, teens and young adults who have experienced trauma or adverse childhood experiences.

National Association of Therapeutic Parents – Public Facebook page offering information on early life trauma.

Hand in Hand Parenting (Facebook page) – is an approach with five interlocking tools that used together, will help you decode your children's challenging behaviours.

Sarah Naish – Author & Therapeutic Parent (Facebook page) – Sarah Naish is the guru on therapeutic parenting.

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Together Talk is your newsletter! Do you have any ideas for future newsletters, activities, events, workshops? Then please email us at PASAdmin@wigan.gov.uk We always appreciate feedback.

As always, please contact the team on 01942 487272 if you require advice or adoption support.

#YouCanAdopt www.togetherforadoption.co.uk 01942 487272