

We need **your help** to recruit more foster carers! Turn to **page 14** to find out more

Rod receives his MBE

In his own words, Devon foster carer Rod Crook was "taken aback" when he first heard that he had been nominated for an MBE for services to Education and Fostering.

In October Rod and his wife Jan, along with their children Alison and Jonathan, travelled to Buckingham Palace to receive his award from Her Majesty the Queen.

"It was a really superb occasion and I was able to talk to Her Majesty about fostering," said Rod.

Rod and Jan have been foster carers for over 40 years, during which time they have looked after 30 children – including several long-term placements. Regardless of this, Rod was extremely shocked when he first found out about his nomination in June this year.

"I was very surprised and somewhat taken aback. I also felt very humble that a group of people had beavered away at the nomination. I am really delighted that fostering has been given such a high profile."

Rod paid tribute to his wife Jan, saying that she "deserves the same recognition, as we are very much a team."

Rod and Jan's fostering placements have varied from one-night stays right through to children staying with them until adulthood.

"We are currently caring for a 15 year old girl, and in fact the majority of our placements have been teenage girls – I think it keeps us young!"



Rod was also honoured for his services to education, after a long teaching career that included 23 years as headteacher of Cockwood Primary School.

With a passion for outdoor learning, for many years Rod led groups of young people on environmental trips to the Wembworthy Residential Centre – which sadly closed in September.

Although now retired, as a school governor Rod is still actively involved in education; and carries out regular voluntary work with several local schools.

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Welcome to the winter newsletter

Dear carer,

Welcome to the Winter edition of the Fostering Newsletter. As always, there are many interesting,

and hopefully helpful, articles from our regular contributors for you to browse.

Firstly, I would like to extend my personal congratulations to Rod Crook on receiving the MBE – what a fantastic achievement and clearly very well deserved. Thank you Rod and Jan for your tireless and continued commitment to Devon's Fostering Service over the last 40 years.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome and introduce you to Liz Burley (CAMHS Placement Support Officer), in the South and West Devon Fostering Team based at Parker's Barn, Totnes. I know from speaking to our carers and staff in this area that they will be delighted to have Liz in post.

On 20 September, Richard Rochester (Fostering Support Worker), Roger Perry (Practice Manager) and I were invited to speak at the Inside Government Conference about Devon's model of working with children and young people in care. This gave us the opportunity to showcase our work in relation to the Duke of Edinburgh

Award Scheme; Inspire Programme linked to the Olympics 2012 and Devon's Activities, Sports and Hobbies (DASH); Climb Hi Club; Sports Active; kayaking and the many other activities and clubs run throughout the year by our highly skilled team of support workers. Feedback received from other speakers and delegates was very positive.

Early in the new year, we are hoping to launch Devon's new Parent and Child Placement and Assessment Service which will be headed up by Peter Chalkley (Operations Manager for the Family Intervention Support Service). We will be in touch with existing carers who currently offer parent and child placements, to provide detailed information and ascertain interest in this new service. For any other carers who would like to find out more, please speak to your supervising social worker in the first instance.

As you will read, Kathy and her team are currently working hard to recruit more carers and what we know for sure is that the best way to do this is by word of mouth from our existing carers. To achieve this we need your help!

Wishing you a peaceful and happy christmas

Sally Fitton, Operations Manager, Fostering

Celebrating the achievements of children and young people in care

In March 2012 we will be celebrating the achievements of children and young people in our care.

This is a chance to recognise, and say well done, for real achievement for individual children and young people. Successful nominees will be awarded a certificate and voucher, and an event is being organised for presentation and celebration.

This is your opportunity to nominate a child or young person in care who you think has achieved something significant over the last twelve months in one or more of these categories:

- doing something which shows personal development
- doing something well in sport, music, arts, social or leisure activities
- doing something well at school or college.

We are asking for nominations for children and young people aged 5-21 - or aged up to 24 if in higher education - who have been looked after by Devon County Council for 13 or more weeks and are happy to be nominated.

For a nomination form visit
www.devon.gov.uk/cicawards

New interactive careers and learning tool

If you care for, or support, a young person over the age of 19 who is struggling to find career information and opportunities – you may be interested in Lifelong Learning Accounts.

This is a new free online service from the government designed to help people aged 19 and over to get improved access to jobs and career development opportunities. Lifelong Learning Accounts allows the user to take more control over their learning by providing clear information and advice on skills, careers and financial support all in one place.

Users who sign up for an account will have free access to a number of online tools, including:

- a tool to identify interests, strengths and needs
- localised course and job searches
- a CV builder
- an 'eligibility checker' to identify whether Government funding is available
- a facility to store all their personal learner information, such as CVs, skills tests, job and course searches in one easily accessible place.

Account holders will be signposted to relevant learners' forums and communities through social media sites such as **Facebook** and **Twitter**.



Minister for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning, John Hayes said: "Lifelong Learning Accounts will encourage individuals to learn, and keep on learning. I want the accounts to help build a national community with the desire to seek out knowledge and skills and invest in their own success.

"All young people and adults should have the chance to learn and to excel in their chosen skill, getting into work and progressing in their chosen career."



As well as improving access to careers information and personal data, the accounts will encourage users to link up with other learners to share knowledge and experiences. The accounts will also enable training providers to respond better to what learners want and help careers advisers to deliver targeted advice and support based on an individual's interests.

The Lifelong Learning Accounts offer will continue to develop in 2012 and beyond to provide account holders with the information they want in a way that best suits them. For more information and to sign up for an account, visit www.direct.gov.uk/lifelonglearningaccount

Important changes to travel claims

When completing your **PUMAV** travel claims for mileage make sure that on the reverse side of the form you specify the points of your journey and the purpose of the journey.

For example:

Home (Exeter) to Oaklands Court (Tiverton) to Home (Exeter) for the Foster Carer Strategy Group.

Not doing this could mean that forms are returned and your payment is delayed.



Update from the Fostering Network

Sons and Daughters Week

October was the Fostering Network's annual celebration of the contribution that sons and daughters make to the fostering task. We encouraged our members to use the event as a chance to recognise and reward everything that young people do as part of the fostering family.

This year we have heard about a wide range of events planned to say thank you, including a roller disco, an afternoon at a local Playzone, a trip to a safari park, a bonfire and fireworks and a pottery painting workshop. To mark the event, we also held a competition for young people to write 'a week in the life' blog for our website during the campaign. To read the blog visit

www.fostering.net/events/sons-daughters-week

Welfare Reform Bill

The Government has now accepted the main points that we have been asking for. We wanted:

- disregard of fostering income to be continued for benefits claimants
- full-time foster carers with a fostered child under 16 will not have any work search requirements imposed when Universal Credit is introduced, and this will apply where teenagers aged 16 to 18 require exceptional attention
- Universal Credit will continue to be paid for eight weeks after the fostered child leaves the placement.

We continue to campaign on Housing Benefit and better training for benefits staff as the Welfare Reform Bill moves through Parliament. Please see the website for details at

www.fostering.net/benefits-campaign

New publications

The Fostering Network's handy new series of publications published two new titles in October. Following on from the hugely popular Fostering Regulations, Guidance and NMS 2011 (England) comes Family and Friends Foster Care and A Foster Care Handbook for Supervising Social Workers.

A Foster Care Handbook for Supervising Social Workers is a comprehensive guide that sets out clearly the requirements of this role, and offers practical guidance and references to research around key tasks. It also takes account of the significant changes affecting fostering services since 1 April 2011.

Family and Friends Foster Care is for everyone who is thinking about becoming a family and friends foster carer and for those who are family and friends foster carers already. It explains what is involved, what is expected of family and friends foster care social workers and others, and what support will be available.

To order visit www.fosteringresources.co.uk



Adapted from the Fostering Network Newsletter.



Bursaries for those aged 16-19

You may already be aware that young people going into post-16 education in September 2011 will be eligible to receive a bursary. This is different from the Educational Maintenance Allowance, but will provide further critical support for our young people.

Young people whose date of birth is between 31 August 1992 and 1 September 1994 will be eligible to receive the bursary. It is £1,200 in total and children in care and care leavers are automatically entitled to the full allowance. The bursary should be used to cover the costs of essential items that are necessary to support the young person to maximize their learning opportunities. It is paid by the school or college and is not controlled by Devon County Council. As such, arrangements for payments could vary between the different colleges.

The bursary can be used to pay for:

- books and equipment for the young person's course
 - the costs of any fees or exam re-sits
 - transport to and from college
 - field trip which are essential for the course
 - the cost of going to interviews and open days.
- There may be other items which would be decided on as necessary.

All young people in care and care leavers should have received a letter advising them about the bursary. The letter is also the young person's evidence that they are in care or a care leaver and will need to be taken into school or college to claim the bursary. Once the college has this letter they will know that they need to pay the bursary to the young person. If the young person attends a school or college outside of Devon it will be the responsibility of that provider to pay the young person the bursary.

We are currently looking to clarify the entitlement for young people who become looked after aged 16 and 17 and for those who are homeless at 16 and 17. Some older young people may be eligible to continue to receive the EMA allowance if they have received it for the last academic year. In 2011/12 it will be reduced to £20 a week so they are advised to also take up the 16-19 bursary.

Please encourage your young person to take their confirmation letter to school or college. They may need some help in thinking about who is the best person to take the letter to. You can find more information about the bursary at www.education.gov.uk/16to19/student-support/a0077824/the-16-19-bursary-scheme

Apprenticeships for young people in Devon

Anyone living in England, over 16 years old and not in full-time education can apply for an apprenticeship.

As employees, apprentices earn a wage and work alongside experienced staff to gain job-specific skills. Off the job, usually on a day-release basis, apprentices receive training to work towards nationally recognised qualifications. The minimum salary is £2.60 per hour, however many earn significantly more.

With over 200 different types of apprenticeships on offer and with over 150 vacancies in Devon, there are lots of opportunities available.

To register young people should:

1. Visit www.apprenticeships.org.uk
2. Click 'Search for vacancies' in the 'Vacancies' box on the home page.
3. Click the 'Register now' link under 'New User?' and fill in their details, creating a username and password - remember to keep these details safe.
4. A confirmation email will be sent. There will be a link in the email which must be clicked to activate the account.

Once registered young people can:

- search and apply for apprenticeships
- get free vacancy alerts by text and email
- track the progress of their applications online.

Are your children vaccinated?

One of the most important things any parent, including foster parents, can do for their child is to make sure that they have all their routine childhood vaccinations, so they are protected against disease.

The most recent outbreak of measles in South Devon was this year - reminding parents and carers that disease is real. That's why NHS Devon is working with GPs and children's centres to remind parents to complete the whole **Childhood Immunisation Programme**.

Don't Hesitate - Vaccinate! is the message from Tracy Fabiano, Immunisation Co-ordinator for NHS Devon. Tracy said; "Vaccination is the most effective way of keeping them protected against infectious diseases. Ideally, children should have their vaccinations at the right age to protect them as early as possible and minimise the risk of infection."



Routine childhood immunisation programme
Each vaccination is given as a single injection into the muscle of the thigh or upper arm.

At what age to immunise	To protect against	Vaccine given
Two months old	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), polio and <i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b (Hib) Pneumococcal disease	DTaP/IPV/Hib and Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV)
Three months old	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio and Hib Meningococcal group C disease (MenC)	DTaP/IPV/Hib and MenC
Four months old	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio and Hib MenC Pneumococcal disease	DTaP/IPV/Hib and MenC and PCV
Between 12 and 13 months old - within a month of the first birthday	Hib MenC Pneumococcal disease Measles, mumps and rubella (German measles)	Hib/MenC, PCV and MMR
Three years and four months or soon after	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis and polio Measles, mumps and rubella	DTaP/IPV or dTaP/IPV and MMR
Girls aged 12 to 13 years	Cervical cancer caused by human papillomavirus types 16 and 18	HPV
13 to 18 years old	Tetanus, diphtheria and polio	Td/IPV

Boosters and second vaccinations are needed at pre-school age as vaccinations can fade over time, so it is particularly important to top up before joining a new school community. To remind parents and carers to complete the programme posters and leaflets will be distributed through children's centres and pre-schools, and Tracy Fabiano will be running meet and greet sessions at the children's centres in South Devon to answer any questions or concerns. For more information contact Tracy on **01392 267667** or **07837 685347**.

'The two public health interventions that have had the greatest impact on the world's health are clean water and vaccines.'
World Health Organisation

What's in your First Aid Kit?



It is important to have a well-stocked first aid kit in the home to deal with minor accidents and injuries.

Your first aid kit should be locked and kept in a cool, dry place out of the reach of children. Drugs and medicines should be checked regularly to make sure that they are still within their use by dates. Always read instructions and use the suggested dose. A basic first aid kit should contain:

- plasters – in a variety of sizes and shapes
- small, medium and large sterile dressings
- at least two sterile eye dressings
- triangular bandages
- crepe rolled bandages
- safety pins
- disposable sterile gloves
- tweezers
- scissors
- alcohol-free cleansing wipes
- sticky-tape – for example Micropore
- a thermometer – preferably digital
- skin rash cream – such as hydrocortisone or calendula
- cream or spray to relieve bites and stings
- antiseptic cream
- painkillers – such as Paracetamol or infant Paracetamol for children
- Aspirin (not to be given to children under 16) or Ibuprofen
- cough medicine
- decongestant tablets or nasal spray
- antihistamine tablets
- distilled water to clean wounds or use as an eye bath.

Children in Care Nurses (CICNs) Cathy Jermey and Ruth White recently ran a 'Health Matters' training day for foster carers.

Firstly, a big thank you to Alan Crabbe who held a fascinating session on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues. Alan has agreed to do a regular 'question and answer' section for the Fostering newsletter, so please send in your questions to cathy.jermey@devon.gov.uk

During the afternoon, we discussed what CICNs do and CIC health assessments (HAs).

Several carers said that HAs had been useful in:

- accessing other services such as CAMHS
- highlighting past illnesses
- addressing young peoples health concerns
- ensuring vaccinations were updated
- reinforcing health messages such as personal hygiene.

The group came up with a number of suggestions to help carers prepare young people for their HAs.

- Reassure them that it is not a medical but a chance to chat about their health.
- Be honest – yourself and encourage the young person to be honest.
- Ask the young person where they would like it to be (within reason) and who they would like to be there.
- Explain confidentiality.
- Have health information ready, such as details of immunisations, dentist and optician.

More information about HAs can be found in the **Health assessments for children in care** factsheet, available from www.devon.gov.uk/cypsfactsheets. A DVD is also available – please contact Cathy Jermey at cathy.jermey@devon.gov.uk

Please feel free to get in touch with any other suggestions or questions about HAs, and thank you again to everybody that attended the Health Matters training. We will be passing on your comments and ideas for future training.

New statistics for children in care

The Department for Education has released the most recent figures for children in care in England.

65,520 children were looked after at 31 March 2011, an increase of two per cent on 2010 and the highest number since 1987. The vast majority of children in care, 74 per cent, are in foster placements.

The number of adoptions has continued to fall, with 3,050 looked after children adopted during year ending March 2011, five per cent fewer than in 2010. The number of children placed for adoption has also continued to fall, to 2,450, a reduction of two per cent on 2010 and a reduction of 10 per cent on 2007.

Only 60 children under the age of one were adopted in the year ending March 2011, compared to 70 children in 2010 and 150 in 2007. The average length of time children waited to be adopted was two years and seven months.

The proportion of care leavers not in education, employment or training has increased from 32 per cent in 2010 to 33 per cent in 2011.

Commenting on the statistics, Children's Minister Tim Loughton said: "Today's statistics are a timely reminder that we must redouble our efforts to do better for children in care.

"It's worrying that the number of adoptions has continued to decline, and it's simply not good enough for vulnerable children to be waiting well over two years to be adopted. It's also concerning that for those children leaving care, around a third are not in education, employment or training – much higher than the general population. We're determined to change this. New guidance, issued earlier this year, stripped away some of the myths blocking potentially suitable adoptions.

"A new adoption adviser, Martin Narey, is working to reduce delay in the system and help local authorities improve their practice. We are also helping to support care leavers into education and employment through the successful FromCare2Work programme.

"But this is only the start. The Family Justice Review, due later in the year, will be crucial in tackling the delays and bureaucracy hampering the family courts. Later in the year, we will also be responding to Martin Narey's adoption report and addressing some of his concerns about the system."

Following on from this, the government plans to work with the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) and the Fostering Network to deliver some important messages in relation to adoption and fostering.

The vast majority of children in care, 74 per cent, are in foster placements.

BAAF and the Fostering Network are jointly developing a dedicated web page through which members of the public who are interested in finding out more about adoption and fostering can access the National Adoption

Week website or the Fostering Network's website. There will also be signposting within these websites to specialist helplines which will be run by BAAF and the Fostering Network.

The government hopes that as a result of this campaign there will also be an increase in calls to local authority fostering and adoption teams and Devon's Fostering Team are getting prepared to deal with more enquires.

It is important to remember that we always need foster carers in Devon and that one of the most effective ways of recruiting new carers is through the recommendation of existing carers. If you know someone who may be interested in becoming a foster carer please talk to them about your own experiences and encourage them to contact us on **0845 155 1013**.

Keeping your child's data safe

In our role as corporate parents we look at, and assess, all the needs of a child or young person in our care. This means that we often have to share information with foster carers and with services such as education, health and social care. It also means that as the child or young person's carer you may need to share information with us.

To do this safely and securely we have a set of guidelines which must be followed whenever data or information about a child or young person is shared.

Remember, however you send information send the absolute minimum amount of information you can. The information shared should not identify the child or young person unless it has to. Only ever share details which have been requested or are needed.

If you are not sure whether you should share information about a child or young person then do not share and speak to your social worker as soon as possible.

If you would like to know more about information sharing visit the Information Commissioner's Office at www.ico.gov.uk



Guidelines for sending information

Email

- Only send personal information by email when it is absolutely necessary and only email to a secure email account, such as one ending in **.gov.uk** or **.nhs.uk**
- Password protect the document before you email it. Then send the password in a separate email, or telephone the person and tell them the password.

Post

- Mark the envelope 'For the attention of the addressee only' and 'Private'.
- Make sure envelopes and packages are effectively sealed and have the correct postage.
- Tell the person you sending the information to that it has been sent, and ask them to contact you if they do not receive it in the expected time.

Fax

- Mark the cover sheet 'For the attention of the addressee only'.
- Telephone the recipient before you send the fax to make sure that they know a confidential or sensitive fax is coming.
- Double check the fax number before sending. If possible, use pre-installed fax numbers to minimise the risk of misdialling.

Verbally

- Make sure that your conversation cannot be overheard.
- If you are talking on the phone make sure that you are talking to the correct person.
- If someone you do not know calls you asking for information, ask for their name and their switchboard number and call them back using their organisation's general number and not their direct office number, to ensure they are who they say they are.

Are you afraid of Facebook?

Over the last few years social networking has really taken off as shown by the popularity of sites like Facebook and Twitter. Although there are dangers to young people, and particularly young people who are being fostered, there are also real benefits to using these tools.

What is social networking?

Social networking means doing social activities like talking and sharing things like jokes, photos and important events electronically instead of face-to-face. Websites like Facebook, MySpace and Twitter were set up to allow people to do these things in one place in a connected way. These sites:

- require that users become members
- allow users to create a profile page where they can share information about themselves
- allow users to add other people as friends, or in the case of Twitter, 'follow' others
- allow members to send messages or chat online.

Facebook is also increasingly used as a way to play games online with friends, or to enter competitions or take part in activities.

More than 800 million people worldwide now have a Facebook account

What are the benefits of Facebook?

Sites like Facebook are the main way in which many young people organise their social life and keep in touch with their friends. Preventing young people from using Facebook can mark them out as being different from their friends and leave them behind. Thirty-nine per cent of all UK internet users use social networks and 54% of all 16-24 year olds online have a profile on at least one website.

It is also important to remember that Facebook is not a separate entity, but a part of their everyday social activity. So a young person may use Facebook to send out invites to their birthday party and then use it to share photos taken at the party afterwards.

Communicating online can have many advantages:

- Distance is not important and it is possible to communicate with several people at once.
- It is free.
- It is helpful for people who don't feel confident communicating face to face and may find talking online easier.
- It can be controlled – a young person can switch off the computer or leave the site whenever they want.
- There are different ways to communicate - young people can share photos, videos or links to other websites. They can also send messages, chat 'live' online and send private messages.
- Most young people will need to use computers at school, college and later at work; spending time online helps them learn skills and gain confidence.

What about the issues for young people in care?

Social networking sites can be invaluable in allowing young people to maintain important relationships. They can also help young people lead as 'normal' a life as possible through interacting with their peers on an equal basis. It also allows them to stay in touch with their friends if they have to move placement – especially if they have to move to a new area.

However, Devon foster carer Michelle Bowden believes that carers need to educate themselves about the potential risks of social networking sites and the internet in general.

"You need to know what you are dealing with in the first place," Michelle says.



“Some young people are very clever – they will delete the internet ‘history’ so you can’t see what they have been looking at.”

Michelle, who has spoken about the topic at local carer support groups, had to take drastic action with a child who used social networking sites excessively and to contact someone inappropriately.

“I had to restrict access to Facebook and email, and although I am slowly handing it back, I still have access to the passwords. It is all about trust.”

What can I do?

As highlighted by Michelle, it is important for foster carers to understand the risks, as well as the benefits of sites like Facebook. You wouldn’t expect children to cross the road without teaching them how and the same applies to using the internet. However you also wouldn’t ban children from crossing roads because of the dangers so it’s good to have a positive and safe approach.

The key safety points for young people to remember are:

- Be careful about accepting friend requests from people you don’t know.
- No privacy settings are foolproof – messages and photos posted just for friends can easily be seen by many more people or circulated by the friends you’ve sent them to.
- Never post personal information like phone numbers or addresses.
- Never post where you will be at a particular time – you could be letting someone know where to find you or telling the world your house will be empty.
- Make sure that the privacy settings on your Facebook account are up-to-date and are checked regularly.

- Finally never assume that people are who they say they are online. If you’re not sure about their identity – block them.

There is now a ‘panic button’ on Facebook pages, which was developed by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) This is an application which users add to their page and allows them to report any suspected abuse to CEOP and to Facebook.

For foster carers themselves, Michelle suggests the following general internet awareness tips:

- Make sure that all computers have up-to-date virus protection – you can get free protection from sites like free.avg.com
- Keep your computer in a family room such as the living room, rather than hidden away in a bedroom.
- You can check internet ‘history’ – but be aware that it can be deleted.
- Use an internet filter such as K9 – www.k9webprotection.com, which is free and allows you to block certain categories, such as pornography or gambling, or set passwords.
- Some mobile phone networks will disable internet access on request, and monthly contracts are easier to monitor than pay-as-you-go.
- If you’re really concerned about what a child is looking at online, then allow a set period of internet access each day and sit in the same room.

Where can I find out more?

The Fostering Network provides a range of information about social networking and safe internet use on their website at www.fostering.net

Thank you to Michelle Bowden and the Fostering Network for contributing to this article, in particular the Fostering Network factsheet *Social Networking and Facebook information for foster carers*.

Real families, real lives

Local foster carers Joanna and Dee give an insight into the application process, panel meetings and how fostering has changed their lives...



CASE STUDY #1

Name: Joanna Ireland

Lives: Heavitree, Exeter

Job: Health Care Assistant within Research

Single or couple: With my husband Paul

Length of time fostering: Nearly a year.

Number of fostering placements so far:

Three girls

Currently fostering: One girl

What inspired you to become a foster carer in the first place? I used to be Brownie Guide Leader and District Commissioner, but following a back injury I was unable to carry on because of the physical demands. I wanted to do something else instead, and a friend who was a foster carer herself encouraged me to apply. Our daughters had grown up and we had a spare room, so I thought why not – and that was the start!

How did you find the application process and the experience of attending the panel? Our social worker, Claire, was excellent. She answered all of our questions throughout and made a real difference. When you first walk in the panel room it's quite scary, but the chair was so friendly and really put us at ease. Plus Claire had gone through everything with a fine-tooth-comb beforehand – we were very well-prepared. I am normally the confident one, but I think I was more nervous than Paul! We were actually being filmed for a training DVD, which is now used to help prospective carers prepare for panel meetings.

What advice would you give to others who are due to attend a panel? Potential carers

receive a lot more support material now before the meeting, including the DVD. They know where it will take place and how many people will be there. The main thing I would say is not to worry; it's not as bad as you think it will be. It's a formality you have to go through, but just think of it as a meeting where you will be asked questions.

How long did the meeting take and who was there? About an hour and there are representatives from several agencies – health, education, social care, social workers – usually around 12 people.

How long did you have to wait to find out whether you had been approved? We found out [about the panel's recommendation] on the same day, about half an hour later. The final decision and confirmation comes from the agency decision maker about 10 days later. Our CRB checks, references etc had already been completed so we knew it was the final hurdle.

What are the biggest challenges you have faced and how have you dealt with, and overcome these challenges? Children are usually very nervous when they first arrive. Sometimes you

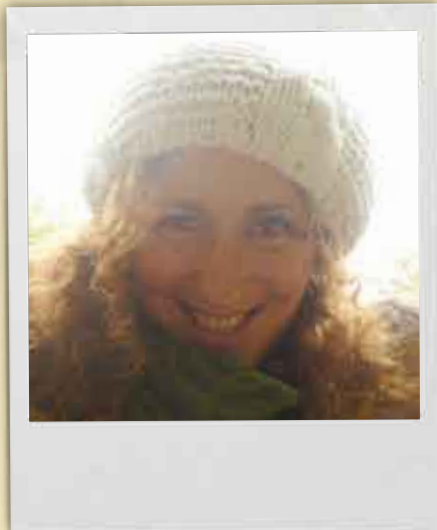


get emergency placements and you both know very little. It's important to ask them questions – find out little things like food allergies or any medication they are taking. We usually go out for a coffee or ice cream as soon as they arrive. It doesn't matter what time it is! There are plenty of other challenges to overcome, such as a parent phoning all the time when they are only supposed to ring once a day. We try to set a precedent and then stick to it. We have a brilliant social worker who is used to dealing with children in care. She has her finger on the pulse and nothing fazes her, which is great as we can ask her anything.

To be honest, the biggest challenge so far has been getting them to do their homework!

What advice would you give to other people who are considering a career as a foster carer?

I've convinced two people already to apply! Many of my friends are a similar age, their children have grown up and left home so they have a spare room. Why not help a child whose parents are unable to look after them? I would like to think that someone would do that for my kids. Devon County Council runs fostering information evenings now and then, which are really helpful. If you are even slightly interested I would definitely recommend popping along to find out more. Go for it.



CASE STUDY #2

Name: Dee Funnell

Job: Trained lawyer, now working as a PA for two artists

Single or couple: Just me

Lives: Winkleigh, North Devon

Length of time fostering: Approved in March 2011, with my first placement in May.

Number of fostering placements so far: Two sisters, then an emergency placement of three siblings (two girls and a boy). Currently two girls on a long-term placement.

What inspired you to become a foster carer in the first place? I wanted to be there for my son when he came home from school, and I realised that I wouldn't be able to do that if I was a lawyer. Fostering is something I had thought about a lot in the past. I love kids and I always thought I would have more than one child, so it seemed as right a time as it was ever going to be.

How did you find the process of applying and being approved to become a foster carer? It took two years! The forms you have to fill in are very in-depth, and could be seen as quite intrusive. However, I found it quite therapeutic to go back over my life.

What are the biggest challenges you have faced and how have you dealt with, and overcome these challenges? You have to attend a lot of meetings, so it's a good job you can apply for travelling expenses! Having new people in your physical space can be tricky at the beginning and my son finds it difficult when the girls are bickering and he can't watch what he wants on TV. The major thing for me is accepting that the system is sometimes flawed. Court processes can be extremely slow, paperwork can get lost and decisions can take ages simply because of the amount of people in the loop who are trying to do their best by the children. The foster kids don't see that though; they just see a system that 'sucks',

which is preventing them from being 'free' of their old life. This can lead to some very disgruntled young people. I try to explain and be as open as I can about what is going on.

What sort of support do you receive? When I've had an issue with problematic behaviour I've received help and guidance from a behavioural specialist, and information on whether it would be appropriate for other agencies to get involved. My social worker, Merry, is new to the job and we are learning together. If there is ever anything she doesn't know or isn't completely sure of, she will go away and find out and get back to me. Although she works part time there is always someone else I can speak to within the team. The girls' social worker Phil, is amazing. Anything they need that falls outside of the box – such as taxis for after-school clubs, funding for guitar lessons or clothing for Ten Tors – he will do his best to sort it out for them.

What do you feel are the biggest rewards as a foster carer? Seeing children relax and feel safe, open up and start to trust you. Having young people around who teach you how to laugh at new things. Learning new things every day. I have realised that foster children often appreciate the simpler things that our own kids sometimes take for granted. One-on-one baking or walking to the shops together, reading a story or playing a game,

putting them to bed and reading them a story, all these things are invaluable. One of the most touching moments was when one of my girls, who is 13, said that when they had to go to respite her nine-year-old sister got really upset because I wasn't there to say good night. They had never had someone go in to say good night to them or check on them before the carer went to bed.

What advice would you give to other people who are considering a career as a foster carer?

I try to be an advocate for what the children want as it is the adults who are generally making all the decisions and they are often in a position where they feel they have no control. Sometimes you may have to fight for what your foster child wants/needs, especially when it comes to funding. You might have to be a bit pushy. If an unfavourable decision has been made and it is something you or the child feels strongly about you can appeal to have a decision reassessed. I know this sounds obvious but don't become a foster carer unless you LOVE kids. Don't do it for the money (it's just enough) or martyrdom – as there are easier ways save your soul. Nor to 'save' children, as unfortunately some can't be saved or aren't with you long enough. Be prepared to be open, patient beyond belief, flexible, ingenious with 'behavioural management', understanding and non-judgmental. Good luck!



We need your help!

We need **existing carers** to help spread the word and recruit new foster families. You will soon be receiving a recruitment pack in the post. Please take a **few minutes** to visit your local school, health centre, library, GP practice or church, and ask them to display a poster, some leaflets or a few bookmarks. This is a great way to promote fostering in Devon.

Thank you!

What's in your children's lunch boxes?

Which have completed research which suggests that giving a child just two pre-packed lunch box products could add 22g sugar and 1.8g salt to their daily intake.

That's over a quarter of the recommended sugar intake and over half the maximum daily salt intake for a five year old.

The consumer champion assessed the nutrition content of items targeted at children's lunch boxes and found that the healthy impression they gave was far from reality.

Eight in 10 parents questioned, who gave their child a packed lunch told Which? they included such pre-packed 'children's food' in their lunch box.



These items aren't cheap either. Adding just a Dairylea Lunchables pack and a Robinson's Fruit Shoot Drink to a child's lunch box would add up to £1.86. The average primary school meal costs £1.91.

Richard Lloyd, executive director at Which?, says: "These products might seem like handy fillers for your child's lunch box, but they can be bad for their health and your wallet. You're better off making your own children's lunches or giving them school dinners which are much more nutritionally balanced."

Which? wants clearer nutrition labelling on food, including traffic light labelling, to make it easier to choose healthy options – seven in 10 parents told Which? they'd like foods targeted at children to use traffic light labelling.

The consumer champion also wants to see more robust rules on when products can make health and nutrition claims, to stop manufacturers from making items that contain high amounts sugar, fat and salt from appearing healthier than they are.

For more information on healthy lunch choices and suggestions for encouraging children to eat more fruit and veg visit www.nhs.uk/Change4Life

- **Fruit Factory Fruit Strings** are almost 50% sugar - each 20g serving contains 9.6g sugar.
- **Kellogg's Coco Pops Snack Bar** contains 8g (42%) sugar per bar.
- Each 40g tube of **Petits Filous Frubes** contains 5.8g (14.5%) sugar.
- One pack of **Dairylea Lunchables Ham'n'Cheese Crackers** contains 1.8g salt, more than half the daily allowance for a five-year-old.
- Each 200ml bottle of **Robinsons Fruit Shoot Juice** (blackcurrant and apple) contains 22g (26%) sugar - over 4 teaspoons and a quarter of a 5-10 year old's guideline daily amount of sugar.

Did you know that reading with children or regularly taking them to the library can help them to succeed later in life and be more confident?

It can also help to build the relationship between you and help to show children that reading is an important and fun way to spend time. Not only that, it's **free** and the trained staff in your local library will be happy to help you find the right books to make everyone in your family happy.

Library welcome packs

When children in Devon start a period in care, they should automatically receive a free library welcome pack including a library membership card. If any children in your care have not yet received their pack, please contact us using the details below or ask at your local library.

Activities for children

Most libraries offer free activities for children and young people. These include Bounce and Rhyme sessions for babies and toddlers, story sessions, reading groups, and craft sessions during school holidays.



All libraries offer the Bookstart Bear Club for under-fives and BookTrack for children aged six and over. These schemes are a fun way to encourage children to read for pleasure, collecting certificates or badges along the way.

Help with homework

Most libraries have books and other resources which can help with homework, including online material, which can be accessed from home if you have a library card. Staff are on hand to help and advise, and if there isn't anything available locally, under 18s can reserve books from other libraries free of charge.





Computers

There are computers with Internet access in all libraries. Everyone is entitled to half an hour free access per person per day, which includes the use of office software, the Internet, and the ability to save work to disc or memory stick. Under 18s can have up to an hour free for study, subject to availability. They can also hire a computer for longer if there is one available and they pay a small charge before they begin.

A safe place

Libraries are a safe, welcoming place for everyone. All libraries have a special children's space; some bigger ones have young people's areas too.

Spoken word CDs

Most libraries have stories on CD. These are fun to listen to and are great for children who love stories but who may find reading a bit of a struggle. They are also great for long car journeys or as a bedtime calm-down. Children can borrow these for free.

Books for parents and carers

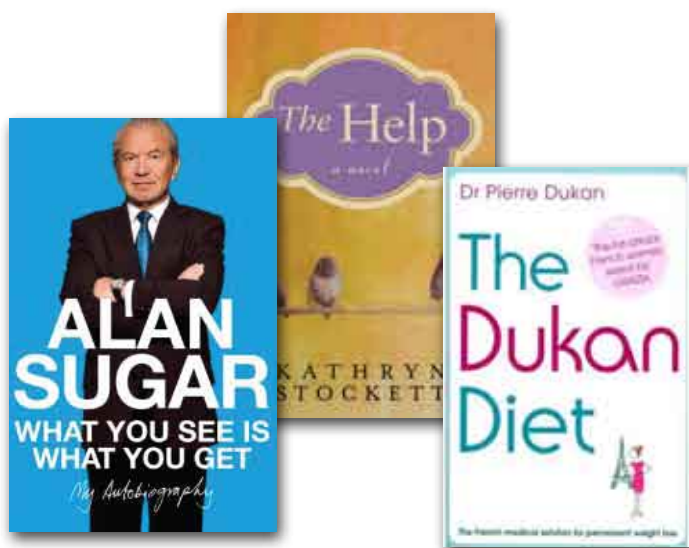
Foster carers are now eligible for concessions in the local library. Borrowing books and using the computers is already free, but now you will receive reduced overdue charges, free loan of audio books, free loan of music CDs and reduced reservation charges. To get these concessions all you will need to do is to show your Fostering ID card to library staff the next time you use the library.

Some Devon libraries have special 'family matters' collections. These contain books and materials covering a range of parenting and health issues such as education, healthy eating, bereavement and behaviour management. Just ask at your local library.

Remember you can pop down to your local library to find some great new reads for your children...



...and some great new reads for you!



Contact us:
01392 384315
devlibs@devon.gov.uk
www.devon.gov.uk/libraries

News from the Youth Participation Team

We are Lizz Prangle and Emma Hall – youth workers working across the county, specifically with young people in care.

Our role is to give young people in care the opportunity to have a say and influence the services that affect them. We do this in lots of different ways, from fun drop-ins to more formal meetings and opportunities with County Councillors and senior staff at Devon County Council.

We recently completed a piece of work with young people in care who attend the Exeter and East Devon **Voices 2 Be Heard Forum** and the **RIO social group**. The young people were asked to share their personal achievements, the things that they were proud of and the people they admire. We wanted to give young people an opportunity to share their very personal achievements and to recognise that everyone has achieved something to be proud of. Achievement is not always about GCSE results or going to university, but is about overcoming personal fears and barriers.

Through the discussions young people gave and received praise for the things they were most proud of. As they talked about their achievements they grew in confidence and we made sure every achievement was acknowledged, celebrated and recorded. We also asked the young people to talk about the people they admired. We did this to help them identify their own aspirations and to have an opportunity to thank those people.



Things we are proud of:

“Swimming for Devon.”

“Through a hard point in my life I kept my head knuckled down and I am **doing well** in my school life.”

“My behaviour at school... **going to lessons**, stopping myself from getting kicked out of school.”

“I am proud that I have given myself a **confidence boost**.”

“I am really proud that I **stood up and spoke** in front of a room full of people at the Designated Teachers Conference.”

“Going to college and **sticking at my course**.”

“Being a **loyal** friend and knowing when to stick up for people.”

“I am proud that I have **coped** with my situation.”

“I am proud of the RIO group, **we started it ourselves** and we have kept the group going.”

“I am most proud of making new friends in my new foster home. I have **grown in confidence**, which means I can sing in front of crowds. I don't feel shy, I can say what I think and talk to different people. Talking to my foster mum has made me grow in confidence and experience.”

“I am proud of the time I spend **having fun** with my support worker.”

“I am proud of **getting into college**, it was really difficult as I couldn't do the course I wanted to do.”

“I **sang in front of a group**, during CD workshops and in front of 30 young people at the Bicton Care Leavers Residential.”

“I have **trained staff and foster carers** in preparing young people for adult life. I have gone from doing one bit, to being involved in the whole course.”

“Living on my own.”

“Being on an outward bound course and climbing Ben Nevis, although I didn’t want to!”

“We are proud of Voices 2 Be Heard, keeping it going for three years, making a CD which is challenging stereotypes. We are proud that we have spoken in front of County Councillors and senior managers at corporate parent events and other meetings. We have started planning a board game to accompany our CD to raise awareness of what it is really like to be in care.”

People we admire:

“Neil, my support worker, he has helped me, he takes me out and we have fun.”

“My Mum’s best mate who died last year, she was selfless and was here through everything I went through, and understood everything I went through.”

“My foster mum. She has done well and moved on from things which happened to her in the past. She was in care and now she is now a foster carer.”

“Tulisa (from X-Factor). She went from having a bad past, looking after her Mum from the age of 10 years old, to sorting her life out and turning things around for herself.”

“My mates are always there for me and make me smile.”

“I really admire my foster mum because she gives me ways to make things better. She shares her past experiences that help me overcome the next hurdle. I don’t know she is just lovely!”

Remember – there is still time to nominate your foster child or young person for the Children in Care Achievement Event in March. This is an amazing celebration evening for children in care and a chance for them to get recognition for any achievement, no matter how big or small. Visit www.devon.gov.uk/cicawards to nominate.

Regular activities

Children in Care Council – Stand Up Speak Up

This is for anyone in care aged 11–21 across Devon. Meetings are usually held on the second Saturday of the month from 10am at County Hall in Exeter.

Voices 2 Be Heard and RIO

These Exeter groups are held on Thursdays (11-16 year olds) and Wednesdays (16 -21 year olds)

The Okehampton group

Held on Wednesdays for young people aged 12 and upwards.

Care Leavers Forum, Newton Abbot

Runs once a month on Mondays from 6pm–8pm. For information contact Sein Hands on **01392 384798** or email sein.hands@devon.gov.uk

Ongoing and future opportunities

About Us Magazine – writing and editing

About Us magazine is produced twice a year by, and for, young people leaving care. We always need young people to contribute articles, stories and artwork.

Arts project

Following the success of music project, Listen to Our Words, we are now applying for funding to run a series of art workshops across Devon over the next two years.

Consultations

We are always being asked for young people’s views on various aspects of being in care. There are lots of opportunities to give their opinion and sometimes there are even incentives!

Feel free to get in touch to discuss any of these opportunities or share any ideas you may have. We are also more than happy to come out and meet you and the young people you care for.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Lizz 07891 512344

elizabeth.prangle@devon.gov.uk

Emma 07891 512343

emma.hall@devon.gov.uk

Training and development update

Thank you to carers who have applied for training. Most courses are filling up but please do still get your applications in as we are always reviewing our waiting lists and these inform our planning for next year.

We have managed to put on some additional courses this year to help with clearing waiting lists. Extra courses have been arranged for:

- The behaviour is not the problem
- Trauma and recovery
- Depression and anxiety
- Contact

We are also looking to put on extra core training courses to meet waiting lists for:

- Pro-active approach to conflict
- First aid

Sharon Bligh will be contacting carers on the waiting list when the details are confirmed.

We are looking at piloting a new IT training session in the new year as a result of feedback from carers. As this will be an additional course invites will be sent out through fostering support social workers. Let your support worker know if you would be interested in this training.

Annual Evaluation Day

This is on Wednesday 7 December 2011 at Cullompton Rugby Club and is your opportunity to get involved in evaluation our training and planning training for next year. If you would like to attend contact Sharon Bligh on **01392 386062** or email sharon.bligh@devon.gov.uk

CWDC workbooks

A total of 268 carers have now had workbooks signed off - this represents 169 carer households! Any carers who have problems with completing their workbooks should by now have had a discussion about this with their fostering supervising social worker, and should have a plan in place to achieve completion.

There is a clear expectation that all carers will complete the CWDC Induction Standards. This is embedded in the National Minimum standards and Ofsted are already raising this as an ongoing issue in their inspection of other local authority fostering services.

We have done really well in Devon, but we could do even better! Can I urge all carers and their supervising social workers to get workbooks completed and ready for sign off as soon as possible.

Welcome day for foster carers

The Welcome Day has been booked for 19 April 2012 in Tiverton. This is an opportunity for carers who have started fostering for Devon to meet up with fellow carers, managers and staff to share experiences and hear about the support available from Devon Fostering. Put the date in your diary now and you will receive an invite nearer the time.

Fostering changes: How to improve relationships and manage difficult behaviour

This 12 week course is aimed at carers who look after pre-school children up to age 12 and is due to run from 10 January 2012 to 3 April 2012.

Feedback from carers who have attended this group training has been very positive. There are real benefits for children and carers in working through this programme. If you are interested in attending please let us know. You will find more information on page 22 of the Training Programme. If you want to find out more contact the course trainers: foster carer Mandy Heggadon on **01392 209942** or fostering social worker Claire Bennett on **01392 380737**.

Fostering attachment

This training is now up and running and we are hearing very positive feedback. Thank you to the carers who have committed to this training programme.

New foster carer recruitment

We are running adverts again after the summer holiday period. Watch out for our adverts in your local paper. We have also had an article in the Connect magazine which went out free to households in Devon.

The Recruitment and Assessment team are busy with new carer assessments and we are pleased to be welcoming carers to the service. We are working hard to try to ensure that prospective carers do not have to wait too long for the Skills to Foster training courses and that we process their assessment as soon as we can. Inevitably some people will experience delay but we are doing our best to improve on this.

It's now time for you to do your bit to promote fostering for Devon.

We are asking all carers to display a poster or put out some leaflets in their local area. You will soon be receiving a recruitment pack in the post. It only takes a little of your time but this really is an effective way of getting information out there. Please do support this initiative.

Thank you to all those carers who help us with recruitment and information and training sessions. You do a brilliant job.



Bullying findings published

A new report based on the findings of research into school age bullying has been published and is available to download from the DfE website.

'Reducing bullying amongst the worst affected' is aimed to help those developing policy, communications and implementation plans to address the prevalence of bullying.

According to the report summary, bullying affects the majority of school children in the UK:

1. Bullying affects most school children at some point, either as a victim, a bully or a bystander.
2. The worst-affected groups, such as those with SEN, experience bullying more frequently.
3. The causes of bullying are usually similar – a drive to demonstrate social power, often focusing on the perceived 'difference' of a victim.
4. The likelihood of participating in bullying is strongly correlated with what a potential bully sees as 'normal' behaviour in that context.
5. The importance of social context suggests that 'whole school approaches' may be effective in tackling all forms of bullying.
6. The increased frequency and severity with which some victims experience bullying suggests those most at risk might need specific support.
7. There is a misperception that bullying is more frequent and is undertaken by more people than in reality.
8. Research suggests that work that corrects misperceptions of bullying frequency, where it exists, may have a significant effect on an individual's propensity to bully.

The full report is available to download from www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00078-2011

Contacts

Strategy Group

The Fostering Strategy Group is the forum where issues affecting the day-to-day running of the service, and its future development, are discussed by carers and management. If there's something you'd like to bring up, simply call your nearest representative:

Barnstaple	Dawn and Sheridan Toms	01598 710857
Crediton (DYPAS)	Lisa Jones	01363 772080
Exeter (DYPAS)	Felicity Whitehead	01395 233882
Exeter	Maggie Peters	01392 446608
Exeter	Lewis Crowden	01392 214721
Exeter	Angela Philips	01392 926122
Honiton	Lynn Palmer	01404 42458
Newton Abbot	Graham Legg	01626 331058
Teignmouth	Jenny and Charles Thorpe	01626 775478
Tavistock	Leslie Pratt	01822 617753

Nurses for Children in Care

If you need help or advice concerning the health of a child or young person you're looking after call your area's nurse for children in care.

North Devon	
Lesley Cuthbert lesleycuthbert@nhs.net	07870 655925
Exeter and East Devon	
Cathy Jermey cathy.jermey@devon.gov.uk	07817 276807
South Devon	
Gwyneth Nightingale gwyneth.nightingale@nhs.net	07967 154202

Peer Guides

If you feel isolated or worried, in need of a bit of support, or if you just want to talk things over - call a Peer Guide, preferably between 9am and 9pm!

North and Mid Devon	
Anne Hayes	01271 830529
Elaine Horrel	01271 379813
Heather Newman	01884 254110
Debbie and Stephen Whiteway	01884 821440
Exeter and East Devon	
Shirley Carnall	01404 43991
Kathy Jones	01984 633041
Sarah Turner	01392 272056
South and West Devon	
Carol Gander	01822 617753
Graham Legg	01626 331058
Jill Smith	01548 831024

CWDC Mentors

We will now be continuing with a smaller number of CWDC mentors whose main role will be to work on geographical areas and link in with newly-approved carers to help them with their CWDC workbook completion.

South and West area	
Graham Legg graham-legg@tiscali.co.uk	01626 331058 07891 479088
Exeter and East area	
Mandy Heggadon two.believers@blueyonder.co.uk	01392 209942
North and Mid area	
Mandy Smith mandyat17@aol.com	01237 479645
Family and Friends carers	
David Jones jonesd39@hotmail.com	01548 580023

CAMHS Placement Support Officers

Once a referral has been made by your social worker, you might find these numbers useful.

North Devon	
Sonja Upton sonja.upton@devon.gov.uk St. George's Road, Barnstaple	01392 388062 07966 878321
Exeter, East and Mid Devon	
Mel Nash mel.nash@devon.gov.uk Magdalen House, Exeter	01392 383784 07966 876044
South and West Devon	
Liz Burley liz.burley@devon.gov.uk Parkers Barn, Totnes	01392 386054 07715 806227

Youth Service

Find out more about Devon Youth Service at www.devonyouthservice.org.uk or call **01392 382049**

For details of activities in your area, talk to your local divisional youth officer.

Exeter, East Devon and Teignbridge	01392 662110
Torrige, North and Mid Devon, South Hams and West Devon	01626 367579

Exclusion

For answers to frequently asked questions go to www.devon.gov.uk/exclusions

Exeter, Torrige, North and Mid Devon	
David Archer	01392 388559
Exeter and East, South and West Devon	
Marc Kastner	01392 383944

For independent information and advice about the exclusion process, call The Advisory Centre for Education's Exclusions Advice Line on **01392 383925** (Monday to Friday 10am-5pm) or visit www.ace-ed.org.uk

Finance

South West, South Hams, Mid and North Devon	
Maggie Downton	01392 386015
Susan Stevens	01392 386094
Exeter, East Devon, Teignbridge	
Karen Watson	01392 384034
Sharon Barker	01392 384028
Family Care Workers Scheme	
Shirley Blair	01392 386017
Frances Hogan	01392 386017

Educational Psychology

Barnstaple	01271 388701
Exeter	01392 686300
Totnes	01803 863481
www.devon.gov.uk/educational_psychology	

Education Welfare

Barnstaple	01271 388548
Exeter	01392 383903
Totnes	01392 386810
www.devon.gov.uk/education_welfare	

Connexions

Freephone	0800 9755 111
Barnstaple	01271 378585
Exeter	01392 203603
Newton Abbot	01626 367579
Torquay	01803 200202

For more information visit the local website www.connexions-cd.org.uk or the national website www.connexions.gov.uk

School Taxi Cancellations

If you cancel a child's taxi directly with the taxi firm at short notice, or out of hours, let us know as soon as possible – call **01392 384757** or email childrenincareteamtcs-mailbox@devon.gov.uk

If you need to make a cancellation during working hours, let the child's social worker know as usual.

E-learning for foster carers

E-learning stands for electronic learning which means learning through any electronic device including radio, TV, DVD and on a computer.

E-learning means you can:

- access material whenever you want to
- start, save your work and return later
- work at your own pace
- access learning at home or at any location which suits you.

The majority of e-learning is now done online and with approximately 60% of the population now having access to the internet, many learning packages have been created for those who wish to learn at home, in the office or in any public space with internet access.

In the **Social Care Workforce Development Team** we recognise the value of e-learning and have now made some of our training available electronically.

However, we know that not everyone feels confident using online resources so we are planning a range of Internet training sessions which will help you with:

- accessing the Internet
- searching for information
- finding education and learning tools for you and your foster children
- monitoring access and the use of passwords, codes and identities.



The training sessions will be held in DCC IT suites in the new year and we will send out the dates before Christmas.

Useful sites

In the meantime, if you do want to start having a look around some useful sites are listed below.

- www.learningpool.com/devon – our e-learning site which features a range of different e-learning modules.
- <http://tinyurl.com/DGelearning> – information on e-learning from Directgov with links to other useful resources
- www.bbc.co.uk/webwise – a clear and useful guide to using computers and the internet
- www.bbc.co.uk/schools/parents – resources for parents of children of all ages and links to educational games and e-learning.

**Contributions and ideas are very welcome.
The next edition will be published in spring 2012.**

**Please send contributions by
17 March 2012 to: Kelly Doonan
email: cypspubs@devon.gov.uk**

Devon
County Council