

# NT Adoption News



A quarterly newsletter sent to you by the **adoption team**

## Welcome...

....to another edition of the Adoption Newsletter!

I hope that this finds you well. It has been a busy time in the Permanence Team over the last few months with new staff recruited to positions within the team, including a qualified Play Therapist and our Post SGO support service starting. My counterpart Team manager Emma has also left us for one year to have a baby and I am delighted to say that she has delivered a baby girl and they are both doing well.

We have exciting changes ahead of us and I hope to be able to give you more information as to the details of these in the next Newsletter plus the dates for the summer adoption event. As always I would appreciate your comments and suggestions in regards to the service that

we offer or on anything that you would like to see within these Newsletters as we move forward. Please send these to [AdoptionSupport@leics.gov.uk](mailto:AdoptionSupport@leics.gov.uk)

Take care



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# Virtual School

Hi,

As the Virtual School Head for Leicestershire, I am delighted to be able to contribute to this latest edition of the adoption newsletter and to introduce our service to you.

The aim of the Virtual School is to promote educational achievement and positive outcomes for children in care and, following the Children and Social Work Act 2017, for previously looked after children as they continue to experience educational challenges after leaving care.

Through training, we share tips and strategies to support children to succeed in education. We promote understanding of how previous life experiences impact on a child and how, as adults, we can support them to grow, develop and fulfil their potential.

We support adoptive parents, guardians and educators of previously looked-after children from the point at which they become

eligible for free early education up to the end of Year 11 (aged 16), provided they are on roll at an education setting in Leicestershire, no matter where they live.

Schools now have to name a teacher who has the responsibility for supporting and promoting the education of previously looked after children, so if you are unaware of the designated teacher in the school your child attends, please either ask the school direct or contact us and we should be able to help.

We welcome enquiries about education from adoptive parents, providers of early education, designated teachers in maintained schools and academies, and providers of alternative education. We are able to give general advice and information about individual children and we also deliver training to improve awareness of the vulnerability and needs of previously looked-after children. This includes promoting good practice about identifying and meeting needs and

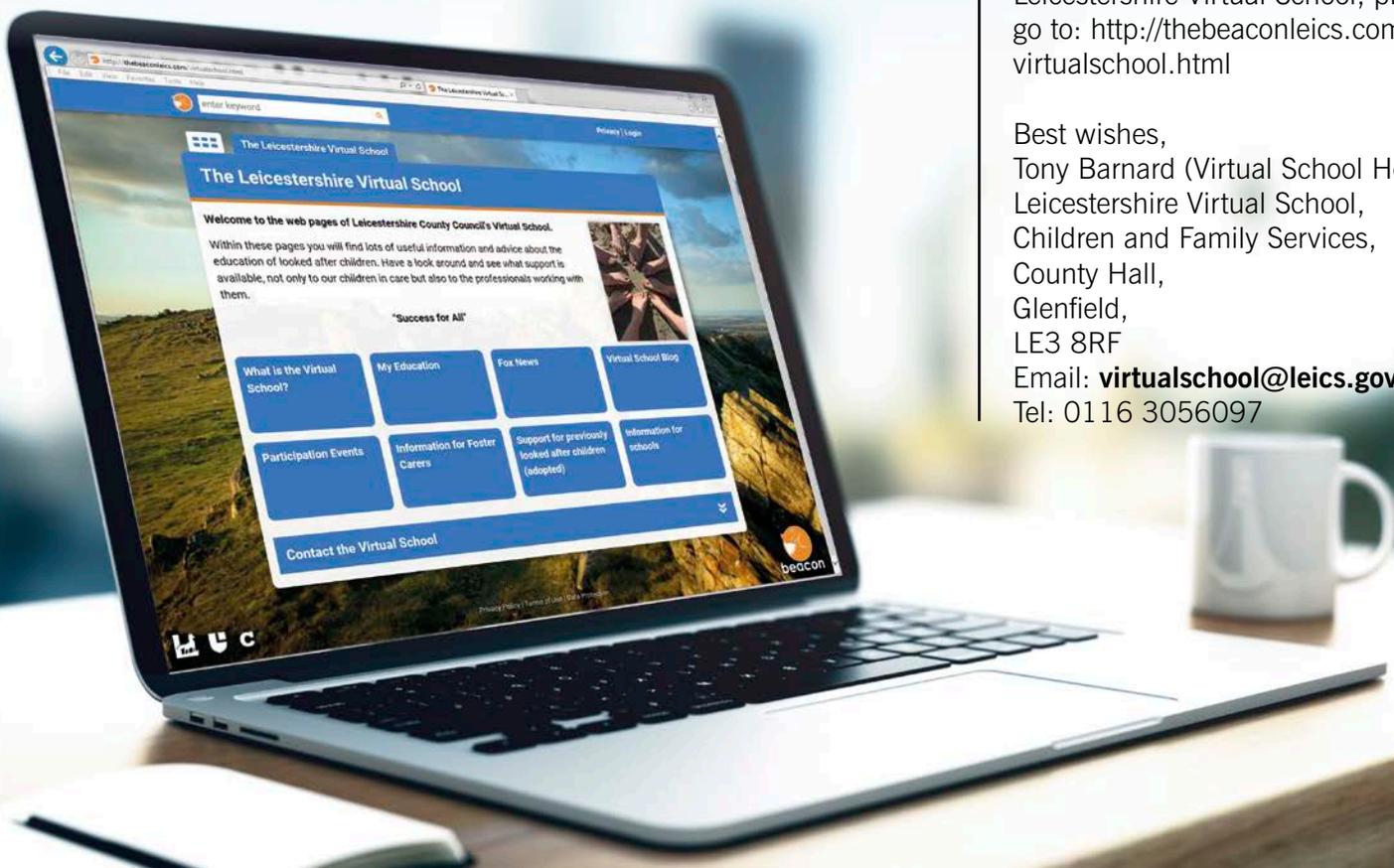
guidance on the effective use of the Pupil Premium Plus (PPP) funding.

Children who were looked after by an English or Welsh local authority immediately before being adopted, or who left local authority care on a Special Guardianship Order or Child Arrangements Order (previously known as a Residence Order) qualify for PPP; funding given directly to schools by the government for the educational benefit of qualifying pupils.

To make sure your child is registered for PPP, you need to declare your child's status to the school so they can include the information in their January census on which allocation is based. Schools should let parents know how they have spent the additional funding via their website and as a parent, you are able to ask how your child has benefitted from it. In 2018-19 the Previously Looked-After PPP allocation will be £2,300 per child.

For further details about the Leicestershire Virtual School, please go to: <http://thebeaconleics.com/virtualschool.html>

Best wishes,  
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## Training

We currently offer training to adopters covering the following areas;

- To understand the role of Leicestershire Virtual School
- To understand the effect of trauma and attachment difficulties and the barriers to learning for adopted children at school
- To be familiar with a range of strategies to support children in school
- To promote effective communication between adoptive parents and schools and positive home-school links

The sessions have now been delivered several times and have been very well received by those attending. As a result of this training adopters have reported they been able to work more effectively with schools.

Following on from a recent session one adopter highlighted the attachment training offered by the Virtual School to their child's school. The school booked whole school staff training on attachment and trauma which was delivered in January. The adopter had input into the session to allow them to share their child's specific journey. Feedback from the adopter said;

*“A huge thank you for today and a really informative session I know talking to both the school and pre-school afterwards they found it an incredibly valuable course and we definitely brought our son's journey to life, which should help their schooling. I really appreciate you taking the time out to deliver this training.”*

We are organising our next batch of training sessions and to enable as many adopters as possible to attend we would like to consult on what time and day would be the most convenient to the majority of adopters.

We would therefore be very grateful if you could complete the following very short online survey.

<https://surveys.leics.gov.uk/snapwebhost/s.asp?k=151567164734>

## Upcoming workshop

In collaboration with Kate Cairns Associates the Virtual School is running a workshop on:

### **Foetal Alcohol Exposure: Working with children with organic brain damage**

Date: 6th March (there are still a few places left)

Cost - Free -Lunch is not included

### **About the workshop**

A half day workshop that takes a wide look at Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) examining the lifelong impact of foetal exposure to alcohol, it aims to provide ideas for positive strategies for working more effectively with

children and young people affected by Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD).

### **The venue**

NSPCC National Training Centre, 3 Gilmour Close, Beaumont Leys, Leicester, Leicestershire, LE4 1EZ

### **About the speaker**

Brian Roberts is an independent consultant and trainer on supporting vulnerable and traumatised children and young people. His teaching career of over 25 years culminated in being Head of Virtual School in two English local authorities. Brian has also been a Local Authority foster carer and Special Guardian for over 20 years, providing with his wife long-term

foster care for large sibling groups. Two of the girls living with Brian have been seriously disabled by their birth mothers' consumption of alcohol whilst pregnant, and this has led to him becoming an expert in Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD). It is estimated that 3 in 10 of all children in the care system are affected to some degree by FASD. He presents on the topic nationally and also advises the Department for Education on the condition.

To book your place visit:

[www.kca.training/register.cfm?form=Leics-AAS-2018FASD](http://www.kca.training/register.cfm?form=Leics-AAS-2018FASD)

# The Highs and Lows of the Early Days of Placement

Our daughter Millie came to us at just over 8 months old, we were already parents to our 3 year old birth daughter Jess and absolutely beside our selves with excitement at becoming a family of four. In preparation for this my husband and I had several conversations about what the first few weeks could look like for us and we decided to have an open mind, reduce the pressure by having realistic expectations and also looking at the worse case scenario's for the first few days of having her.

Our worse case scenario was that she would literally just cry all the time, not settle at night and we would be completely sleep deprived. I'm happy to report that we didn't come anywhere near our worse case scenario, and it only took 20 minutes on the first night to settle her to sleep.

We were so pleased that we finally had Millie at home with us but there is no denying that it was a strange feeling to have this little girl that we didn't know who had already developed a little personality, habits and her own likes and dislikes. We so desperately wanted her to feel happy, secure and of course loved. However, we didn't want to bombard and overwhelm her especially in her first few days of being with us. We made sure we were always available to her as she

wasn't quite crawling at this point, so we would sit near her or she could always see one of us. We played games with her that encouraged physical contact like row row and round the garden and did lots of singing with her as we found when we sang, she really maintained eye contact with us. Singing and reading was great because Jess could join in with us and Millie was getting used to hearing our voices. We played games where we gave her a toy and then asked for it back by saying Ta, and peekaboo, these games required interaction and daily repetition of these games helped to strengthen our bond over the first few weeks and months.

We stuck to as much of the routine that Millie had in foster care to when she came to live with us, especially for

the first couple of weeks then we just tweaked and made small changes that were practical for us as a family. One example is that for nap time she was settled downstairs in her pushchair, this really didn't work for us having a 3 year old running around so after about 3 weeks we started settling Millie in her cot, which took a couple of days for her to adapt to this change.

A couple of the things we found tough were Millie didn't take to solid food at first at all and wouldn't let us feed her with a spoon. This was difficult because you have health visitors/social workers etc keeping track of her progress and it can almost be an added pressure when things aren't going well. However, we embraced their advice and support, taking what we needed from it, understanding that everybody is working towards your child's best interests.

Also Millie wasn't what you would call a cuddly baby, she was very independent and would only really cuddle into us when she was having a bottle. As soon as she was mobile she wouldn't sit on our laps. This was a little difficult at first because we just wanted to cover her in kisses and cuddles, and of course sometimes we did but we also gave her space in the hope that she would start to come to us. Now eighteen months on, she is the most affectionate little girl and she loves to cuddle and quite often randomly gives us kisses and cuddles and sits on our laps and loves to snuggle under a blanket. There have been ups and downs over the past eighteen months but I think that really is part of being a parent and we couldn't imagine our lives without our Millie now.

This article does not use the real names of the children to protect their identity



# Bounty Pack

The Post Adoption Team are putting together a bounty pack of information that will be handed out to each adopter at their six week post placement check, which will be completed by our Adoption Support Worker. This will also be available for Interagency Adopters.

Examples of what will be included within our bounty pack are:



- Adoption handbook – this is a very informative book full of all information to help and support you along the way as to becoming parents for an adopted child.

- Therapeutic parenting intervention – this includes information on DDP and PACE parenting. We have also included information on Theraplay and activities that you could use to strengthen and nurture attachments.

- Letter box information – this includes the benefits of Letterbox and to support you through the Letterbox contact process.
- A recent newsletter – our newsletters are full of up to date information within the Adoption Service and current and upcoming adoption events.
- List of helpful supportive organisations.

We Hope you enjoy the pack, please feel free to contact the Adoption team with any information you would like to share. Any feedback is welcomed as we are always looking for ways to improve our service; please email [AdoptionSupport@leics.gov.uk](mailto:AdoptionSupport@leics.gov.uk)



## Can I get Help with Childcare Costs?

As of September 2017, the Department of education have increased free childcare funding from 15 to 30 hours per week.

Please see the below link, which will guide you through the calculation process to see if your child is eligible. The childcare provider does need to be registered with the scheme to offer this and 30 hours funding can begin on the FIRST TERM following the child's THIRD BIRTHDAY. Applications can be made THREE months before this.

Providers may ask for proof of adoption at the time of application.

More information and the online application form is available on the HM Government Website:

[www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/)



# Birth Records

## A day in the life”

### of a Birth Records Counsellor



I (Lorraine) began my role as a Birth Records Counsellor back in 2015 when I joined the Adoption Team as an agency worker. At that time Birth Records Counselling was only a small part of the work I did within the team but I very quickly decided I enjoyed it. In December 2017 I was offered and accepted a permanent position as a Birth Records Counsellor within the Post Adoption Support Team. Since 2015 I have undertaken a level 5 Person Centred Counselling course and the learning from this has enhanced the service I offer to clients.

I (Sarah) joined Leicestershire County Council as a Child Protection Social Worker in 2006. In 2012 I joined the Kinship/Connected Persons Team as an assessor. In 2018 I was delighted to be appointed as a permanent Birth Records Counsellor and I and Lorraine now share this role.

In our role as Birth Records Counsellors we offer emotional as well as administrative support to adults, young and old, who have asked to view and obtain information about their adoption. Part of our role is to 'risk assess' to ensure that sharing sensitive information is appropriate in each case and to minimise the risk of individuals going forth and behaving in ways that may harm them or others.

At Leicestershire County Council we do not offer an intermediary service, for example tracing family members or facilitating reunions, however we do offer to complete what is known as a 'dead or alive' check to clarify whether any birth family members are still alive. If clients wish to go on and trace birth family then we can signpost to agencies who offer this service.

It is hard to say what a 'typical day' looks like for us as each case we deal with is unique, however we have a process of referral and this commences usually with our business support officer, Philippa, receiving notification from the General Records Office advising that someone wishes to access their adoption records. Philippa then requests the file from the agency identified by the General Registry Office.

The law currently requires that all people adopted before 1975 and wishing to obtain their file, must have at least 2 counselling sessions during the process of retrieving and sharing the information.

We offer an initial counselling session and then a second one once we are ready to share their information with them. Once the file is received we will redact any 3rd party information and compile a summary for the client.

We also redact and compile summaries for any files requested 'from' us which are then sent out to the relevant agency for sharing.

We record all our work on Mosaic and each client has a file set up. This file holds scanned copies of all documents we receive in the event that the client mislays or damages these in the future. People who were adopted post 1975 are not obliged to undertake counselling, however this authority offers this service and encourages it as best practice.

Once records have been shared we compile a brief summary of the interviews and forward these to the General Registry Office. We also sign and return compliance documents to the agency who released the file. We discuss the National Adoption Register with the client and provide them with an application form to complete if they choose to be entered on to the register.

Adoption is a lifelong journey and Sarah and I endeavour to provide our service in a sensitive and empathic way with a particular focus on the emotional impact the information shared is likely to have on the client.

In our counselling work we practice the 3 'Core Conditions' of Carl Rogers 'person centred' approach, which are: Unconditional Positive Regard, Empathy and Congruence.

# LAFs

We are Leicestershire Adopters and Foster Carers Support or LAFs. We are a peer support group run by parents for parents.

It began in May 2015 with a handful of adoptive parents meeting for coffee and cake at each other's houses and has grown steadily over the last two years. At the last count we had 132 members in our Facebook group and others in touch by email.

It was great to be able to support one another on our Facebook page over Christmas and the New Year. All those potential triggers and the bad weather make for intense experiences!! It really helped to have a lovely gift to open from 'Secret Santa'; just a little token from another member of the group but great for our self-care. And we knew the end was in sight with two regular meet ups for coffee and cake on the events calendar for January.

There was a really heart-warming gathering at a soft play centre in November. Those who came included a foster carer with her current foster child and two adopters whose children had recently been her foster children. Really lovely to see relationships being maintained and the children all climbing around together.

Recently four LAFs families visited Rebound together for a relaxed bounce session. The session itself was wonderfully quiet and the adults managed a coffee in the café while the lovely staff were supervising/playing with the children. A much needed break and perfect regulating activity for the children.

A group of us also enjoyed our 'work' Christmas do! We ate very well at Zizzi and enjoyed happy banter together. It's lovely to see connections being made and friendships growing.

Forest school, organised by the group through a small trusted local business, is always great fun for families with camp fire cooking, crafts and forest school activities. This time we made our own soup in tin foil parcels; built and lit fires; made potions and even had a try at making spoons.

It was great to meet up with other members of LAFs at the Adoption UK conference. We even ended up sitting together! We were able to carry on discussions about how inspirational and solution focused the conference was on our Facebook Group. We also shared all the presentations and files in the group so everyone had access to the resources.

If you're interested in finding out more about LAFs, please contact us at:

**[lafsgroup@yahoo.com](mailto:lafsgroup@yahoo.com)**

**Twitter @LAFsgroup**

Or speak to your post adoption social worker for a direct referral



**Empathy:** the ability to understand what the client is feeling.

**Congruence:** genuineness, being yourself with the client, not 'the expert'

**Unconditional Positive Regard:** "I'll accept you as you are." The counselor is careful to always maintain a positive attitude to the client.

We recognise that despite being Social Workers the Birth Records Counselling service offers more than just obtaining and handing over information, it offers a therapeutic approach which hopefully enables clients to process often very difficult information in a supportive and non-judgemental environment.

Lorraine Daniels and Sarah Greaves

Post Adoption Support Social Workers



# SEMINARS FOR PROFESSIONALS & ADOPTIVE PARENTS WITH SUE GOULDING

**VENUE:** The King's Centre, Bull Head Street, Wigston, Leicester.

**TIME:** 09:45am - 4pm

Sue Goulding Consultant Clinical Psychologist, Sheffield. Sue has many years of experience in the field of children's mental health and a particular interest in applying the principles of Attachment & Trauma therapy with children and their Adoptive Parents or Foster Carers.

## 'I can't dance - don't ask me'

**Teaching the Dance of Attachment to Children and their carers**

**Tuesday 17th April**

All adopted children are likely to have problems with making secure attachments – at the very least they have all had the trauma of two moves early in life – and some have suffered a lot more! There is now evidence that baby brains are very susceptible to any trauma, including moves and changes of carer. The effect of early trauma can present in a variety of ways and at different stages of a child's life. Effects may be dramatic or subtle! This seminar will raise your awareness to warning signs and help you to enhance the 'healing element' of your parenting.

## 'More Dance Steps'

**Tuesday 22nd May**

A practical program to follow up the introductory session. Participants are expected to have already attended the first day and ideally will have refreshed their memories by reading their hand-outs. This is in order that we can use the second day to the maximum potential to devise a practical plan to help with strategies with your child.

## 'Return to the Dance Floor'

**Tuesday 19th June**

This day is designed for people who have already attended both 1 & 2 seminar already and is a chance to consider certain issues in greater depth, which the group consider important. In particular, she will be looking further at:

- Anger
- Trauma
- Adult attachment – implications for adoptive parents
- Therapy
- Supporting children in school

To book your place on one of our seminars please email [adoptionssupport@leics.gov.uk](mailto:adoptionssupport@leics.gov.uk) and tell us your name, address and telephone number. Please remember to include which of the three seminars you would like to attend.

Please note: Our adopters take priority in the allocation of places. If you are unable to get a place on the Spring 2018 seminars then we would look to you attending the following Autumn 2018 Seminars.



## Feedback

If you have any comments, suggestions or questions about the newsletter, please feel free to email [adoptionssupport@leics.gov.uk](mailto:adoptionssupport@leics.gov.uk)



## Your Stories

If you would like to include anything in the newsletter, (we would love to hear from your children too) please email the team at the above email address; we aim to get the newsletter out during the last week of the month, so to make sure you get your article included, please get it to me by the middle of the month. If you would like any further information about deadlines, or how to submit your article, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

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